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Adventure

Bill Adams
J. D. Newsom
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Albert Richard Wetjen
Hugh Pendexter
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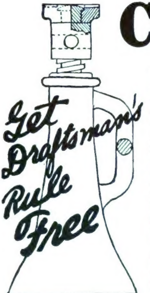
George Bruce Marquis
William Wells



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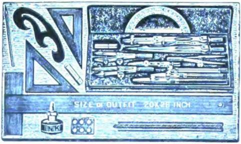

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Chief Draftsman, Engineers' Equipment Co., 1951 Lawrence Ave.
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Adventure
March 10th 1923
Vol. XXXIX No. IV

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Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.

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Headings . . . . **Arthur Schwieder**

Cover Design . . . . **E. A. Urdang**

"TOGETHER thou and I will beard the Nine Unknown!" boasted *Ali Ben Ali.* "We will—" But he was interrupted as men who go up against that mysterious order are likely to be. And his allies—*Grim, Ramsden, King* and the rest—at once find themselves up against murder, arson, and all the crimes of Thuggee. "THE NINE UNKNOWN," a five-part story of India, by Talbot Mundy, begins in the next issue.

TRIAL by combat! When an envoy of Navarre is poisoned in the very court of Barcelona tradition demands that justice be sought with sword and lance on the jousting-field. But *Cercamon* decides that a little investigation will do no harm. "JUDGMENT BY STEEL," by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

"BANDITING is a paying business in this county," remarked the stage-driver who was driving *Bill Collier* to Pinkerton City. When *Bill* learned the size of the rewards that were out for bringing in those same bandits, he decided that sheriffing could also be made a paying business, and applied for the job. "BAD MEN MAKE GOOD PICKINGS," a novelette of the Southwest in 1888, by Frederick J. Jackson, complete in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

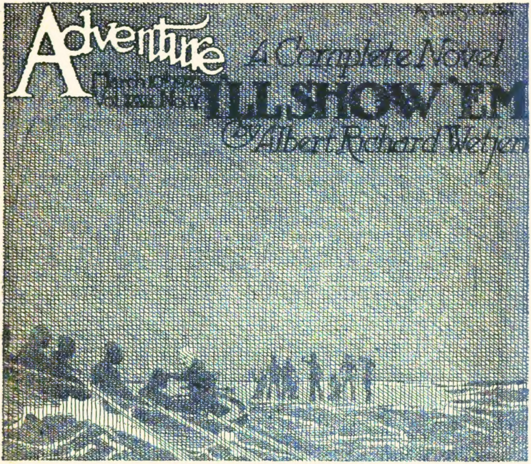
Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure* — the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Adventure

A Complete Novel

I'LL SHOW 'EM

By Albert Richard Wetjen



Author of "The Unforeseen," "The Salving of the Berwick," etc.

ALL THE beaches were gossiping about it. From Levuka to New Guinea, from the Paumotus to far Hawaii and back the matter was discussed with many chuckles and over many glasses of strong drink. Old-timers grew husky and moist-eyed with memories, and even new chums, who were hardly disturbed over the thing, felt secret twinges of regret that the old rollicking island days had gone forever. All over the Pacific traders and planters and schooner-captains talked of one thing and of one thing only.

It was more than a nine days' wonder. It threatened to keep the whole of the island life occupied with conversation for an indefinite period of time. And it was all over one man, a man who weighed perhaps one hundred pounds, stood five feet one inch in height and had never been known to be otherwise than always slightly drunk. The whole matter could be summed up in exactly seven words: Seth Orville had gone to sea again.

It was not that he had merely taken a trip on a steamer or on one of his own schooners. It was not that he had gone for a long cruise on his own sumptuous steam yacht, the *Tiger*. He frequently did such things. But they had never aroused more than mere passing comment. This time he had gone to sea to work!

He was to receive wages and was as liable to be fired as any one of his own employees, so gossip ran. But gossip was slightly wrong there, though right in the main.

"Had Seth Orville gone mad?" folks asked themselves.

Orville was a power in the islands. Just how much he was worth no one knew within a few millions. He owned many plantations and many ships, and his traders ranged the Pacific from east to west. Half the wealth of the tropic south passed through his

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hands. And he had gone back to sea to work.

The manner of his going was spasmodic. Most things he did were done that way. The jibes of a drunken shipmaster and the swift temper of Orville himself were to blame perhaps. Or it may have been the little worm of restlessness gnawing at the old adventurer, causing him to turn longing thoughts to the old sailing days when he had first come, young and clean and strong, to the islands from out of the frozen north.

Slim and fair-haired he had been in those days, a gray-eyed smiling youth who looked so very harmless and was apt to arouse laughter in the hearts of those he ran against. But he had proved during the savage years that followed that he was as good a man as the rest of the island pioneers, and a great deal better than some.

In the late '70's he had bucked "Bully" Hayes and shown that genial blackguard that he was not by any means invincible. He had warred intermittently with Bobby Towns and many another half-pirate who then held power. And out of it all, quick-witted, driving unfaltering to his goal, inevitable and afraid of nothing that moved, from savage islands and still more savage people he had garnered the first of a vast fortune. He had fought fever and thirst and starvation, defied the spear and the tomahawk and the Snider bullet. And when all the genial blackguards of his era had died and were well-nigh forgotten, mere legendary heroes, he still held sway and was a driving force not to be ignored in the South Seas.

The only change the passing years brought to Orville was to make him stay ashore more and more as fresh business demanded his attention. He ceased to sail untiringly from plantation to plantation, from trading-store to pearling-grounds and back. He employed capable managers and spent most of his time in his great house in Apia and in the Apia saloons, leaving Samoa for only occasional brief, comfortable runs to Suva or Sydney to see some old friends or to conclude some business that demanded his presence.

The thousand and one minute details of his vast interests he left to others, though he still handled the controlling strings and guided the destinies of many men and many lands. And now, after fifteen years of easy shore-going life, he had returned to sea to earn his pay and keep as a master-mariner.

It all happened somewhat in this fashion: The bark *Marylin*, one of the biggest vessels Orville owned, sailed into Apia harbor one hot misty morning after a tramping voyage of nearly two years duration. Her master, Robert Delroy, went ashore and made his detailed report at the offices. Then he proceeded to punish considerable quantities of Scotch.

By the time Orville saw the report and summoned Captain Delroy to him, the master of the *Marylin* had acquired a beautiful jingle. It caused him to forget matters and things and conventions and to believe that he was the cheese, the whole cheese, and nothing but the cheese. Also it had a great part in sending Orville to sea.

Nevertheless, despite the captain's state of mind and emotion, when Orville's message reached him he obeyed the summons. He would have indignantly denied that he was obeying because of a secret fear of his employer. He firmly believed he was going of his own free will and because he really wanted to see Orville personally and explain one or two matters that certainly needed explaining.

The meeting took place on the broad, cool veranda of Orville's house. Thick green vines hung from the roof over the front of the veranda and sheltered it from the dusty road outside. A small, round wood table with four chairs drawn up near it, a folding camp-bed and a spittoon were the sole furnishings the veranda boasted.

At the table sat Orville himself, a half-filled glass at his elbow. In front of him, stretched out on the table-top, was the offensive report that swelled the veins of his neck and caused him to mutter fearful things, not all under his breath.

He was shamelessly dressed for a millionaire. His suit of white ducks was somewhat grubby and stained and lacking wholly in creases. His sun-helmet, which he seldom removed, was very dilapidated and much too large for him, seeming to rest on his very ears. His white silk shirt was clean, however, though the black knit tie that fastened his collar was gray with cigar-ash. In the corner of his mouth was the inevitable burned-out black cigar sticking up somewhat arrogantly and half-hidden by a sandy, bleached wisp of mustache.

He drummed on the table with thin, nervous fingers and snorted between oaths as he read the report over and over. He was as usual slightly drunk, though his clear gray eyes were undimmed. Somehow drink never did affect them, not did it shake his queer jog-trotting walk. Yellow-skinned, sun-dried, cynical and slovenly, he awaited the arrival of his employee.

CAPTAIN DELROY came at last. He staggered up the low steps that led to the veranda, pulled aside the screen of living vines with one huge-fingered hand and rolled into view.

He was a big man, fat and uncouth, with bleared dark eyes and a heavy brown mustache. He was dressed in whites, so new that pieces of cotton still clung to them here and there. He nodded with drunken gravity to the little millionaire and with a very dignified expression seated himself unasked at the table with a hiccuping, solemn—

"How do, sir?"

Orville sat and glared.

"Drunk again?" he snarled.

Removing the stub of cigar from his lips, he lifted his glass and drained it, setting it down with a bang.

"Hilo! Glass empty!" he called, and from the high oblong opening that led into the house interior a white-clothed Samoan servant appeared bearing two bottles on a black-japanned tray together with a bowl of crushed ice. Orville said, "Give Delroy a drink," in a tone that might have been used in saying, "Give the dog a drink."

The Samoan brought another glass and filled it and then disappeared into the house. Captain Delroy breathed stertorously and seemed inclined to drop off to sleep. He frowned inanely at the table before him and grunted.

"Well?"

Ice was warm compared to the little millionaire's tone. Sober, the captain would have been scared out of his wits by the glare in Orville's eyes. But he was drunk.

He commenced in dignified tones, after a strenuous effort to pull himself together:

"Please t' see yer—hic!—sir. Verish bad voyage, whatsh——"

"Shut up! See here! According to this report you've not made expenses on the whole voyage. —— good ship. —— of a hold capacity for her size. According to this report again you've had no trouble finding cargoes. Yet you run three hundred pounds behind."

"Like thish, sir. Hic! ——! Hic—like thish——"

"I have had reports about you. Drunk in Sydney. Jailed and fined. Ship lost two weeks time. Drunk in Suva. Lost a week. Drunk in Hong-Kong. Lost ten days. Jailed in Papeete for beating up natives. What the —— are you up to? Answer me, sir; answer me at once! No —— lies! Shut up! You're fired! Get out of my sight and out of Apia. Your mate'll take over the *Marylin*."

The captain straightened slowly, and a vastly injured expression came over his bloated features. He smiled feebly.

"Whash that? Hic! Mate take over—Hic! Shay? What's game? Szat way treat—hic—two yearsh fai'ful service? —— right you gotta talk? Yoush drink more whisky 'n' gin any man in islands."

Orville breathed hard through his nose. His wisp of mustache rose and bristled like a dog's mane. He jumped to his feet and jammed his sun-helmet lower his eyes with one smash of his hand.

"I've a —— good mind to thrash you," he fumed.

The captain was nearly six feet two and broad in proportion. Orville's chest measurement was under thirty. The captain rose with awful gravity and frowned.

"Aw, quit. Hic! You couldn't licksh me. Fire me, eh? Thash a fine way t' carry on! C'n I help bad voyages? Freight low, hard work get crew shometimes. Anyway—" his mood suddenly changed to one one of anger—"what th' —— right you gotta talk? Fine f' you. Sit here in Apia and never go nowheres. Cursh pore shailors 'cause they don' make money.

"——, you go try. You go sea and make monish. You sit here and guzzle-guzzle 'll time. Go 'way t' sea; g' way."

He finished with a snort and peered at the other.

Orville pounded on the table with both clenched fists, and so great was his anger that for a moment he could not speak.

"You —— bum!" he croaked at last. "I was at sea before you were born. I was handling bucko men before you set foot on a ship's deck. I made my reputation before you thought of being called mister by able seamen. Get out of my sight! Get out!"

With a growl the captain took half a step forward and raised his great fist to strike. It was as if a grizzly threatened a rabbit.

But—Orville moved as lightly as a bird, and his own fist took the bigger man with surprizing force in the stomach, bringing his head forward with a jerk. Another blow took him on the tip of his bulbous nose, causing his eyes to water profusely. Then fists reached his jaw, though Orville had to take short jumps to accomplish the thing. Captain Delroy very nearly fell in ignominious defeat.

"Hilo!" screamed Orville.

The big Samoan house-boy came running at his master's call and took in the situation at a glance. Orville stepped back and pounded on the table once again.

"Throw him out! Give him ——!" he cried.

The Samoan seized the bewildered captain by the scruff of the neck and the slack of his pants and proceeded to run him off the veranda. Then he ran him part way down the road. The last words audible came drifting back in gasps.

"Go sea y'self. —— Kanaka! Leggo, I shay. Hic! Go sea——"

Orville straightened his rumpled jacket. He rubbed his skinned knuckles and snorted wrathfully. Then he took a drink, and, sitting violently down, first tore up the offending report and then proceeded to think the matter over. He glared and rumbled at the table-top for quite a while.

THE millionaire's hobby was men. It was the one remaining joy of his life. It was his boast that he himself picked and molded every responsible employee of his. He could get more enjoyment out of forming a man than most men got out of an opera season or a dozen fine horse-races. The best seamen and traders and planters in the Pacific were in his service, and it grieved him as much to find he had employed a failure like Delroy as the loss of a fortune would have grieved other men.

Now it was also Orville's boast that he never sent a man to do something that he did not think he could do himself. This every one accepted and knew.

The assumption had never been brought into question before. Even the newcomers in the islands took it for granted after a brief sojourn had taught them Orville's status.

But the drunken words of Captain Delroy seemed like a challenge to the little millionaire. It occurred to him that he certainly had done nothing of consequence since he had retired from strenuous life some fifteen years before. Were people beginning to think he was a has-been? Was it accepted along the beaches that Seth Orville was now an old man and no longer possessed of the spirit he had once had?

The thought infuriated the little man. He called to Hilo for another drink on the strength of it.

Now it does not take very much to start the little worm of restlessness into full life in a young man full of ambition and desire, even a man to whom the Shining Paths are strange and fearful trails. And it takes still less to start the worm crawling in such an old sailor and adventurer as Orville. For a long time he had been feeling restless and craving action of some sort.

A hot youth does not give promise of a serene old age. And only Orville's body had grown old. His mind was as young and as clear as the day he had run into Apia in his fifty-foot ketch for the first time some forty years before. The words of drunken Captain Delroy gave the little man the very excuse to break loose again that unconsciously he had been looking for.

"What the young pups do I can do," he reassured himself with a growl.

Then he finished his drink, and, getting up from his chair with something very much akin to a song in his heart, he set off downtown at a jog-trot, mopping his sweating brow with a limp silk handkerchief.

He called in at the first saloon to get a drink and grumbled his wrath across the bar to the big bald Swede who served there.

"Seamen are getting insolent nowadays, Svensen. Insolent, sir. Just had one of my captains tell me I was no —— good. Huh!"

"Yaa, no good sailorman any more. I remember——"

"Huh! That's right. No time listen now. S'long."

And the little millionaire was out of the saloon and jog-trotting down the road, while old Svensen grunted something unintelligible and returned to polishing glasses.

"Heard about old Matthews?" an acquaintance of Orville's chuckled as the latter dropped into another saloon and signaled for a drink.

Orville shook his head, sighed vastly and tugged at his wisp of mustache.

"Well, he's got the *Ionia* in port and can't get a skipper for her. She shipped a crew in 'Frisco that'd fair make your skin crawl to look at. Talk about murderers! They scared old Gillman stiff, and he quit as soon as he made the anchorage. All the mates except the second have quit too. Only first engineer standing by the engine-room."

"Huh?" grunted Orville without any great display of interest.

He tilted his glass until he could see the bottom and then set it down slowly. There was a far-away look in his eyes.

"Yes," went on the acquaintance. "Matthews's in a —— of a fix. His ship's due in Sydney very soon. He took a cargo on contract time for delivery, and he stands to lose a bunch of money."

"Fire crew. Get 'nother. Can't understand any man putting up with bad crew. Had a skipper of mine today——"

"Oh, Matthews can't do that——"

"—insult me. Said I was no —— good. H'm! Swine, drunken swine!"

"—because the crew signed on two-year articles and insist——"

"I'm glad I fired the cuss. No —— good! Not a bit of saintly good! Huh!"

"—on staying with the *Ionia*. Matthews's nearly broke and can't afford to ship 'em back to 'Frisco as he'd have to do if he paid them off."

"Waiter! Another! No soda. What's that, what's that? Oh, Matthews broke. Can't get a skipper. H'm! Wonder how he'd like me?"

The acquaintance nearly fell out of his chair. Then he grinned and spoke jestingly.

"Fine, I'd imagine. Any owner would jump at you."

Orville downed his drink in one great gulp and rose abruptly.

"A skipper of mine told me I was no —— good. Said I couldn't run a ship myself. Said I was only good to stay in Apia and guzzle whisky. Skunk. C'm 'long and see Matthews."

"What are you going to do?"

"Get job as skipper of *Ionia*."

"You're crazy. You can't——"

"What! You too? Who said I can't take over any ship that ever floated? I had my master's papers when I was twenty-two. Understand that I can——"

"I didn't mean that. I mean you can't do such a thing in your position. Why, man——"

"—— my position! —— everything! I'm going to show all and sundry that I'm a good man yet. C'm 'long. I'll show 'em."

Pulling his companion by main force from the saloon, Orville set off again at a jog-trot toward the dingy office of Matthews the ship-owner. His mustache bristled with energy, and he positively glared at every man who passed him as if seeking to hear him say he was no good. He had an idea now that every man in Samoa must be of that opinion, and he was going to prove they were wrong.

Used to the little millionaire's eccentricities, the acquaintance paced beside him unwillingly but with something of a grin on his face. He had a notion that he was going to see island history made that afternoon. It was certain that whenever Orville became sufficiently interested in a thing, or sufficiently enraged about it, something was bound to happen.

MATTHEWS, puffy-eyed, gray-haired and rotund, was sitting at his desk, his bullet head in his fat hands and his gaze heavy with despair on the blotter before him. He looked up as Orville trotted in with his companion through the grimy swing door, grunted a "Howdo?" and then dropped his eyes again.

Very formally Orville pulled off his sun-helmet and laid it on the corner of the desk.

"I understand you are in need of a captain for the *Ionia*, sir," he said.

It had been many years since Orville had used that respectful tone of voice when addressing any one, and the old ship-owner looked up abruptly, astonished. Mechanically he opened a drawer by his side and pulled out a bottle and three glasses. Just as mechanically he poured out drinks. Then he looked at Orville and nodded, picking up one of the glasses. And another astonishing thing happened.

"I'd rather talk business before drinking, sir," the little man said.

"Eh?"

Orville's acquaintance chuckled and lit a cigaret. Something was certainly going to happen. He was correspondent for a big Sydney paper, and he scented a coming story.

"I understand you need a captain for the *Ionia*, sir. And I would rather talk business before I drink," Orville repeated very bruskly.

He eyed the glass on the desk with longing.

"Are you crazy? Since when have you had to call me 'sir'? My company is practically owned by you, and it's only by virtue of your grace that we operate separately."

Matthews was half-amused, half-irritated.

"Do I understand the position has been filled, sir?"

"What position? Oh, the *Ionia*. No, no. But what's the great idea? Have you a captain for me? I have searched Apia, and not a capable man can I find. I employed two, but they both quit as soon as they saw the crew and heard old Gillman's story."

"Well, I'll take the job."

"You? Is that a joke? Do you know, Orville, I'm facing ruin? If that cargo isn't in Sydney soon I go to the wall."

"Huh! About the job, sir. Am I eligible?"

"My ——, Orville, you must be crazy. Of course you'd be eligible. But surely you don't want it."

Matthews laughed a trifle bitterly.

"If I had a master's license I'd take the ship out myself," he went on. "You've got that, I know, and there's no man in Samoa I'd sooner have take over my vessel than you. But what should you want with a job that pays eighteen pounds a month? And you worth millions!"

"I'm trying to speak as a prospective employee, sir. If I wasn't I'd call you the biggest —— fool I ever saw. Don't sit there and gape like a blasted owl! I want to know if you'll sign me as master of the *Ionia*."

"Give him the job, Matthews. He's got some fool notion about going to sea again," said the acquaintance over the little millionaire's shoulder.

"Shut up!" Orville snarled at him. "I can get my own jobs."

Matthews scratched his head, puzzled.

"Even if you were in earnest, Orville, I couldn't let you go," he said. "The seamen on board that steamer are nothing but murderers. Have you heard what Gillman experienced? He could prove nothing, of course; the crew's solid to a man almost.

"They put away the third deck officer and two of the engineers. The bosun and chief steward disappeared one night. And the mate was beaten up one dog watch and swears he never even saw the men that did it. The men stick by each other and swear they know nothing about the thing either. Gillman had to log the deaths as 'presumed drowned.' The bodies were not recovered. It's a murder ship.

"I ought to send the crew back to 'Frisco, but I can't. They'd break me clean if I had to pay transportation for that gang and an extra month's wages on top in way of compensation. You know the strict marine laws.

"On the other hand no captain will go to sea with that crew; no good man, that is. I've had two or three of the regular soaks apply for the job, but they'd be no good. They can't handle tough bunches——"

"Tough bunches are my meat, sir. Give me that job."

"Oh, don't talk foolish——"

"Give me that job, —— it!"

"You can't handle them, Orville. They're all young and husky, while you're——"

"I'm one of the regular soaks, eh? Who the —— said I was too old? I'll show any young blood just where it gets off. I can handle any crew God ever put breath into. Is that clear?

"I'm not old nor doddering nor feeble-minded. I'm as husky as the latest greenhorn from America. I eat tough crews. Is that clear, perfectly clear? Now give me that job."

"I can't have your blood on my head. I know you, Orville. You're too impetuous——"

"Do I get that job?"

The little millionaire pounded on the table and glared.

"No. I'm sorry——"

"How much do you want for the *Ionia*"?

"Now, Orville, don't get——"

"How much?"

"But——"

"No wonder you're a failure at business. You talk too much, Matthews. Spit out the price. Pick up your hat. And go home! You're old and feeble-minded, and all you're good for is to stay in Apia and guzzle whisky. Is that clear? Now what's the price?"

"Is he crazy?" the old ship-owner pleaded of the acquaintance, who was enjoying himself immensely.

"I think so," he answered. "At least he is acting a bit above normal. But we expect that of——"

"——! I was called a doddering old fool and a boozer; but you two are like a couple of —— hens. Is there any price on that blasted ship?"

"Well, since you're so persistent, Orville, I'll say thirty thousand."

The ship-owner spoke irritably and named a price he thought would shake the millionaire's sense of proportion. The *Ionia* was an old tub and on the extreme verge of condemnation.

"Pounds or dollars?" quoth Orville, pulling forth his check book.

"Pounds."

The millionaire wrote rapidly. He waved the check a while in the air to dry it and then gave it to Matthews. The ship-owner took it like a man in a dream. Orville pulled a cigar from an inside pocket, bit off the end with relish, spat it away and borrowed a match from the acquaintance, who was now slightly dazed himself.

"Thirty thousand for the old tub of an *Ionia*," he muttered.

Orville snorted.

"I bought that crew, not the —— ship. The crew no man can handle."

"But—but—but—" started Matthews.

"Does that bottle of Scotch go with the ship?" demanded Orville petulantly.

"But—eh? Yes, I suppose——"

"Good. Here's how! Have another."

"Don't you think—" ventured the acquaintance timidly.

"I think nothing. I know. And please address me as Captain Orville. I'm master of the *Ionia*. I hereby sign on myself. Matthews, you old hen, wake up! Have all papers ready tomorrow at eight. Get clearance too. I sail with the tide."

"There's no mates aboard, barring the second. No engineers—" Matthews faltered, still gazing blankly at the check.

"I'll make some during the run. Have a cigar? No? Well, see you t'morrow."

Orville turned abruptly and left the dingy office. Walking down the street, he assumed a slower and more arrogant pace than his usual jog-trot. Also he tilted his dilapidated sun-helmet at a rakish angle. The cigar in his mouth stuck up stiffly, and he tried to twist his mustache into some sort of a curling point.

"Do you know I feel twenty years younger?" he murmured to the acquaintance, who was still with him and who was chuckling hugely as he recovered from the jolt he had received in Matthews' office.

"I'll say you act like it," he murmured back and then broke away to talk excitedly to a group of elderly seamen and to tell them the news.

Orville went serenely to the nearest saloon, and, seating himself with some importance, rapped on the table for the waiter.

About fifteen minutes afterward a huge-shouldered, yellow-haired giant elbowed his way to the little millionaire's side and gripped him by the arm. His blue eyes bored into Orville's and were sternly set, though an elusive twinkle lurked far down in their depths.

"Do I understand you're considering taking over command of the *Ionia*, sir?" he said in a rumbling voice.

Orville flung the great hand off his shoulder and snorted.

"You do. And address me as captain in future, Peterson. Is that clear?"

"So you're going on the *Ionia*, eh?"

"I am."

"Then you're taking me. I'm not seeing you run your little carcass into danger."

"Sit down and drink. And shut that slab of a mouth of yours. I'm skipper of the *Ionia* right now, and wild horses wouldn't drag me off the job. Understand?"

"Absolutely. But you're taking me."

"I'm not. I gave you orders this morning to sail with the schooner *Wenel* at dawn tomorrow. She's bound for the Hebrides. You'll go."

"Not on your life."

"You will. —— it, you will!"

"I'm coming with you. Do you think I'd let the man who lifted me off the beach and set me on my feet run into sudden death? You'll have the *Ionia's* crew thirsting for your blood 'fore you're twelve hours from Apia."

"You mean to say I can't handle that bunch of scum? You go to the Hebrides. Go to ——. Leave me alone, that's all. Now shut up!"

"I've been and interviewed the crew of the *Ionia*. Every man's an escaped convict. Or he ought to be. They wear their sheath-knives sharp and keep their teeth filed. They just dote on hard-case officers. Know what they did to Gillman's men?"

"They won't do it to me."

"Well, I'm coming with you anyway to see they don't."

"You're going to the Hebrides. —— it! Am I boss of my own business or not?

Peterson, you're fired! Understand! You're fired—fired! Is that clear?"

Orville pounded on the table with his clenched fist and made the glasses rattle. That reminded him that his was empty and he beckoned the harassed waiter.

"Now get out!" he concluded.

Jack Peterson, twenty-six, good-tempered and many inches over six feet tall, rose from the chair he had dropped into and smiled benignly down upon his employer. Orville had helped him when he had been drifting about broke on the Samoan beaches, and he was grateful.

Also he loved the little millionaire. Most of Orville's employees did. They were a strange pair. Peterson was the strongest man in the west Pacific, and Orville was the most powerful.

"All right," said the yellow-haired giant pleasantly. "I'm fired. But mind, I'm coming with you."

"Get out of my sight. And stay out!" Orville snarled, and then turned to his replenished glass.

Still smiling, the giant turned away, and Orville grunted after his great back:

"—— insolent bum! Defy me. Huh! Fine fellow though. Hope he doesn't take what I said too seriously. He won't though. He knows what a fool I am. Couldn't think of letting the boy risk that pair of shoulders in a murder ship.

"Huh! Thinks I can't handle a crew. Insolent pup. Give that sort an inch and they take a —— degree!"

* * *

A MAN brushed by a few minutes later and, looking down, recognized the little millionaire.

"Say, heard about Delroy?" he grinned.

Orville grunted and shook his head. He had finished with Delroy. Really had fired him. And men he had fired in earnest ceased to interest him.

"That yellow-haired pup of yours—what's his name? Peterson? That's it. He heard that Delroy gave you a lot of lip. And he heard that it was through that you took that job on the *Ionia*. Say, is that right about the *Ionia?* I mean——"

"Where's Delroy now?" snapped Orville, stirring uneasily in his chair.

The man grinned and rasped his chin with one broken-nailed hand.

"They're still working over him in the horspital."

"That was Peterson, eh?"

"That was Peterson."

"The —— stiff's too fond of looking after my business. Am I boss of my own affairs or am I not? I ask you. Seems I'm not. Look here, you just tell Delroy when he comes to that he can catch the *Wenel* in the morning and sail as mate to the Hebrides. Peterson was to have had the job, but I've fired him.

"Understand? Delroy can have his berth. Teach that yellow-haired pup a lesson. Must show disapproval in some way. Now is that clear?"

"Clear as mud, Orville. But I heard you fired Delroy."

"Fired nothing. Your ears are too —— big, Clary."

"Think so? Well, I'll be going. You've certainly got the burg stirred up tonight. S'long."

"S'long. Hic! Waiter! Another!"

Orville snorted and glared at the drinking throng about him. He pulled his dilapidated sun-helmet still lower over his eyes and breathed hard on his wisp of mustache.

He tried to look displeased. Inwardly he was chuckling. Peterson was a good man, loyal as they made 'em. He'd have to give him a good job somewhere. But not yet. Decidedly not yet. The pup would have to be taught a lesson. He must not get the impression that Seth Orville was a child.

Orville chuckled as he recalled the first job he had given Jack Peterson. It was to go and fire one Hammond, a giant of a planter who was reputed for his strength and hard hitting, and of whom it was said he would not be fired. Peterson had fired him all right.

The whole affair had really been a frame-up, a trick of Orville's to see how Peterson measured under the test of stress. It was the little millionaire's habit to put men he thought of employing through a sort of third degree before he trusted them with any property of his. Frequently he flung them into tight corners or compromising positions, and it was the way they reacted that determined their future careers under Orville's wing.

Peterson had tested out clean and true in his relieving of the erstwhile unrelievable Hammond, and Orville had no more intention of losing his yellow-haired pup than he had of killing him. The evening wore on while Orville pondered matters and drank steadily.

By the time he tottered home to bed that night Apia was in a ferment. From the Peterson-Delroy massacre a dozen minor fights sprang into being. And men besides were wagering hectically that Orville would handle the crew of the *Ionia* as no crew had ever been handled before. That is, the old-timers were so wagering. The new chums smiled skeptically and sneered. The Orville they knew was an untidy, drunken, sun-shriveled little man who swore with tremendous vitality and drank innumerable whiskies and gins.

II

AT SEVEN-THIRTY sharp Orville was out of bed, bathed and dressed in his old sea-going things. A white-covered seaman's cap perched jauntily over one ear; and a white uniform suit with faded bars of gold braid on the jacket shoulders to show his rank, a pair of pipe-clayed, spotless shoes, a clean silk shirt and a new dark tie completed his outfit.

With his return to active ranks Orville was resurrecting his seaman's desire for neatness and cleanliness. Even his ragged wisp of sandy mustache he had endeavored to curl to a point with the aid of brilliantine. His sharp gray eyes were alight with eagerness and his little yellow-skinned body thrilled with the thought that he was going to catch hold once more, going to face again material problems in a world of material men, problems such as there would be no hiring a manager to come and solve.

Since his partial retirement it was true Orville had handled problems, but it had been mostly through other men. He had said, "Do," and it was done; "Go," and men went. But now he was going to face old issues himself. Like an old war-horse who smells powder his head was up, and he was ready for the fray once again.

He breakfasted in haste and in his usual fashion—one glass of whisky and soda, half a pineapple, a mango, two small pieces of toast, a glass of whisky and soda and a final glass of soda and whisky. Then he cocked his cap a little more, said good-by to Hilo, his personal servant, and went down the road to the waterfront, whistling a tops'l-yard chantey that had not been sung for twenty years or more. His baggage had been sent down to the wharf some half an hour previously.

Orville stopped at Matthews' office long enough to say good-by to that harassed worthy and to get the papers of the *Ionia*, and then he went on to the ship.

To his surprize he found quite a little crowd waiting to see him off. He had never known he was so popular before. A dozen old acquaintances came to shake his hand and wish him luck; a dozen more tried to dissuade him from going at all; and several others attempted both things at once. Orville had to resort to bruskness to get away at all.

"H'm! Stand away there. Fling that dunnage in the boat. Make it snappy!"

He spoke testily to the two sullen-visaged seamen from the *Ionia* who had pulled the gig ashore to pick up their new captain. They scowled at him but did as they were bidden, placing the baggage the Samoan house-boys had left on the wharf in the stern sheets of the gig.

"Well, good-by, every one. Don't stand there snuffling like an old cow, Wallace! S'long, Charley! S'long, Walt! 'By, Carey! Smart there, lads. Steady her. Give way!"

And the little millionaire was off, sitting on his baggage in the stern sheets of the gig and waving his thin hand to the little crowd of friends on the wharfside. They watched him clamber like a curious little monkey up the rope-and-wood pilot ladder, hanging from the *Ionia's* side 'midships, and walk for'ard to the bridge. Then they disappeared up-town and dispersed to the saloons to drink and talk the matter over once more.

The *Ionia* was in her way a discredit to her builders. They were Scotch and careful, and the plan of the *Ionia* gave the impression that they had not wasted on her any more steel than could be helped. Nevertheless the ship had been afloat twenty-five years and was still good for another voyage or two, so long as she didn't run into any very rough weather.

Her original name had been the *Dumfries*, and she had sailed from Newcastle, England, with coal for Spain. Two years later she popped up in Buenos Aires under the Brazilian flag, and the name she bore then was not at all like *Dumfries*.

As the *Ferrara* she sailed the nitrate coast for several years and then suddenly disappeared. Rumors reached those interested in her at that time—rumors of mutiny, killings, ship-stealing, more killings; but nothing was ever definitely learned.

She rusted in Vladivostok with the hand of the Imperial Russian heavy upon her. Her holds were full of poached sealskins then, and her crew was busy in Siberia.

By some strange means she was able to take aboard a cargo of paper in Tokyo six months later, though her name was then the *Bear*. She was variously sighted on forbidden pearling grounds, high on sand-bars off the Australian coast, slaving in the Middle Passage, and salving a Chinese junk in the Gulf of Siam. Also she rammed fishing-smacks in the English Channel during the years that followed and was confiscated for smuggling French brandy. Then eventually she was sold by the British Government to Matthews & Company of Sydney and Samoa, by which time her name was the innocent-sounding one of *Ionia*, and her past unsavory record was well-nigh forgotten.

She was a small craft of about fifteen hundred tons, built of steel throughout and rather broad of beam. She possessed a well-deck for'ard, between the t'gallant fo'csle and the high bridge, and one other well-deck aft, between the after end of the engine-room house, which was the after part of the bridge deck, and the for'ard bulkhead of the raised poop. Both of these decks were veritable death-traps when a sea shipped into them, and any one caught there at such a time had not the slightest chance to get away.

The well-decks were sheltered on the beam by somewhat high iron bulwarks; and swinging, noisy ports let out whatever water happened to board. Companions led from the decks to the fo'csle head, the lower bridge and the poop.

The firemen and sailors, twenty men all told, lived for'ard. The stewards and cooks had their quarters next to the engineers 'midships, and the deck officers lived on the lower bridge, immediately above the ship's general saloon.

The tortoise-shell ship's cat lived impartially for'ard, 'midships and aft. The only other living animals aboard were the rats, thousands of them, monster fellows that lurked along the bilges and in strange holes in the rusting steel hull.

The new captain of this ship trotted first up the bridge companion and looked over his own quarters. Then he bellowed for the steward, a pallid-faced slender Jew, and sampled the ship's Scotch. After that he went 'midships to see the chief engineer who, so Matthews had said, was the only officer standing by the engine-room.

As he went along he kept a sharp lookout for the crew, and he was not at all impressed, at least not favorably, by the appearance of those he saw. Both sailors and firemen were vicious-looking fellows, dressed in oddments of clothes and mostly unshaven. He noticed too that all of them, sailors and firemen, carried sheath-knives at the hip. He snorted. He'd show 'em.

He tapped on the door of the chief's room and without waiting for an invitation stepped inside. The chief looked up from a somber-covered book he was reading, and he favored the intruder with a cold stare.

He was a tall, lean man, very much like a scrawny vulture, sour and bad-tempered. His throat was very red and skinny, and his Adam's apple very elongated and prominent. His hair was a pale red, every separate hair seeming to stand up stiffly like a piece of wire. His face was gashed halfway down by a flaming, rolling red mustache that partially hid the large teeth shooting from under the upper lip at an angle of forty-five degrees. His nose was more of a beak, accentuating the vulture-like appearance, somewhat big and puffy. His eyes were of a cold slaty color.

He rose with terrible slowness from the swivel chair he was sitting in and closed his book over the index finger of his right hand. With his left hand he waved toward the door.

"Ye can go oot," he said, and his voice was like a rusty rasp on unpolished granite.

Orville grunted and shut the door behind him and without troubling to remove his seaman's cap sat on the edge of the polished wooden desk that stood against the bulkhead near the door.

"Are you the chief?" he inquired needlessly.

"Ah'll show ye," the other responded with sternness.

He laid down his book and with great deliberation reached round to his hip pocket. He pulled forth a heavy twelve-inch shifting-spanner, and, unfastening the one remaining brass button on his greasy blue-serge uniform jacket, he took a step forward.

"Ah ye goin'?"

Orville grunted again.

"Pleased t' meet you, chief. My name's Orville. I bought the *Ionia* from Mr. Matthews yesterday afternoon. You might have had word from the shore about the deal. I intend to run the packet myself."

The chief very slowly put the spanner back into his pocket. He took a step or two forward and towered above the little millionaire.

"Ah've had one or twa chiels aboard t' sell me coal. Dinna they ken here when a mon says, 'No?' Ah thought you was one. So ye're the new skipper? Well, jest ye ken thot ye'll no coom in here wi'out knockin'."

"I did knock."

"Ah dinna say ye cud coom in."

Orville controlled himself with an effort. He saw very plainly that the chief was a man who would require handling. And he would be worth handling. He must be a good man to stay by the *Ionia* when all his assistants had quit. And Orville was beginning to have a suspicion that he would need a good man or two.

"Sorry, chief," he said, suppressing the hot retort that rose to lips.

The chief was not the man to care who owned or who did not own the ship. He was a law unto himself in matters of common politeness.

"But to talk business," Orville went on, "I understand the crew have been giving trouble."

"Aye, sorr. As ye're sorry we'll say na more. Will ye drink? Scotch? 'Tis the guids. Three fin'ers? Her's look. Th' crew, ye say? Aye, yere preedeecessors' have had a fin' time. Ye'll unnerstan' there wus five men dead 'twixt 'Frisco an' here. Thet poor mate was beaten oop shameful. Ye'll have a care?"

"Oh, I'll be careful. How'd you get by?"

"Ah used——"

The chief pulled forth his twelve-inch shifting-spanner again and waggled the heavy head gravely.

"Twa mon of those whose business 'tis t' atten' th' fires are 'n hospitool toda'. Ah have na'n engineer lef'. They was leary and fled. Ah dinna thin' much of yore body, sorr, but ye've a look in yere eye tha's encooraging, t' say the leas'. Have 'nother drin'?"

Orville slipped off the desk-edge and accepted the proffered glass. He sipped slowly and looked straight up at the Scotchman.

"You're a man after my own heart, chief. Did you say Mackenzie? Ah, yes, Mackenzie. I have a notion that all this ship needed was a good skipper. The black gang seemed to be in good hands. I suppose your assistants went back on you?"

"Ah gie than's fer the compleemint, sorr. Ah cud handle my chiels dandy wi' another guid mon. But Ah hed t' sleep briefly. Ah cudna stan' all watches, ye'll unnerstan'. Trrue, the ship needs a guid skipper. Ah've a notion she has na."

By the time Orville lowered his glass to go Mackenzie and he understood each other very well.

"You're a fine man," the little millionaire repeated. "We'll run this packet between us. Can you make some of your firemen take engineer's watches till we get to Sydney? I'll scare the whole bunch overside then."

"Aye, sorr, Ah c'n that. Ah have one or two guid greasers that'll stan' bein' made engineers of. Coom again, sorr. Ah'll be pleas' t'see ye."

"All right, chief. Get your gang to turn to as soon as you can. I want to sail within the hour."

"Aye, aye, sorr."

"If it comes t' spanner work I'm backing you to the last skull. Is that clear? Prefer belaying-pin or gun m'self, though."

"Aye, each mon t' his oon taste. But ye'll noo deny the spanner's eeffective."

"That's so. Whistle as soon as you've got up steam."

"Aye, aye, sorr. S'lon'."

ORVILLE went out of the cabin with a grunt of acknowledgment and made his way along the deck to the bridge again. The chief took another reflective drink from the whisky-bottle; and then, fastening his solitary jacket button and the front of his blue flannel shirt, he put a greasy gold-badged cap on his head and went down into the engine-room, the twelve-inch shifting-spanner making a long bulge at his hip. He was humming the tune of a hymn in an abstracted manner, as he always did when he was pleased.

Orville went to the door of the second

mate's room and, tapping briefly, went inside as he had done on the occasion of his visit to the chief. A man was lying in the bunk under the open port, his arms hanging over the side and his gray head lolling on the stained pillow. He was in dirty pink flannel pajamas and had evidently not been up yet that morning.

Orville snorted his wrath and, crossing the room, stirred the sleeper. As the deck officer in charge the second should have met him at the head of the pilot ladder when he boarded and have formally handed the ship over to him.

"Hey, what the —— the meaning of this? Get up, I say. Get up! You square-headed bum, turn out! I'll ——"

Then Orville caught a strong stench of gin as the sleeping man muttered and rolled over. The little millionaire looked around and frowned. An empty four-sided bottle was lying on the table. A broken glass rested on the cabin carpet.

"Drunken swine!" he snorted testily. "Don't mind a man drinking so long as he can carry it. On deck there!"

He went to the cabin door and peered for'ard to where he could see the crew lying lazily about under the fo'csle-head awnings, talking and smoking and swearing.

"On deck there! Two of you come up here!"

One or two of the men lifted their heads and looked at the small, spare figure on the bridge, and then they sank back again. They made no attempt to go aft in answer to the captain's hail.

Orville snorted and went fiery red under his yellow skin. He started for'ard but checked himself. It was not time for manhandling yet. He would wait till he got them to sea.

The ship's cook passed just then, coming out of his room near the engineers' quarters and walking for'ard to gaze over the bridge dodger. He was a squat ungainly man with black, unshaven cheeks and vivid dark eyes. His once white jacket was dirty and grease-stained, and he smoked a badly made brown-paper cigaret with evident relish. His age might have been anything from forty to fifty.

"Steward!" Orville called.

The man looked aside at the new captain and for a moment sneered. The crew had already driven away huskier masters from the *Ionia*, and the little, frail wisp who stood in the doorway of the second mate's room was not likely to be able to work the crew very hard.

"Well, what is it?" the cook grumbled, pausing for a moment.

Orville flamed up abruptly.

"Put that —— cigaret out when you're on the bridge! Who in the —— do you think you're talking to?"

From sheer surprize at the volcano that had burst on him the cook obeyed. He mechanically crushed his cigaret under his shoe-heel, and his heavy-jowled face lost its sneer.

"Call me 'sir' when you speak to me! Is that clear?"

"Yes—yes, sir. Yessir."

"Then come here and help me carry this swine to the gig."

"But I'm the cook here. There's plenty of sailor's for'ard, sir—sir."

"If you don't keep your mouth shut you'll be out a job. I didn't ask what you were. Never mind the sailors. I'll attend to them later. Come here!"

"Yessir."

Between them the two men carried the drunken second mate down to the main deck and with the aid of a heaving-line lowered him to the gig, which had not yet been hauled aboard. Orville hastily gathered what few of the man's things he could find into a battered tin trunk and pitched that down into the gig too. Then he spoke again to the cook, who was watching him in a somewhat dazed fashion.

"Get in that boat and row that swine ashore. Dump him on the wharf and come back *pronto*."

The cook seemed about to make another protest but thought better of it. Sullenly he lowered himself down the wood-and-rope pilot ladder and seated himself in the gig. Just as sullenly he took hold of the oars. He looked up before he started off.

"I'm not an able seaman, sir," he said resentfully. "This is a sailor's job, and——"

The man was perfectly in the right, but Orville was beyond considering such things.

"Work those blasted oars, or I'll plug you so full of holes you'll look like a sieve. You mutinous swine! Defy me? I'm going to straighten out the bunch of you, and I'm going to start now. Is that clear? Understand? Then make it snappy, you dog, and row like ——!"

The cook started rowing awkwardly but

with surprizing alacrity, and the gig shot toward the wharf. From the deck above Mackenzie, who had come from below to get an evil-smelling pipe from his room, spoke with great solemnity.

"Ye're a fule t'throw 'way yere only mate. But I'm no' sayin' ye're wron'. Ye're startin' right, sorr. Ah hope ye finish it."

Orville looked up and grunted

" 'Lo, chief. Huh! I'm standing no nonsense. I can make mates or break 'em, and that goes here. I'm just beginning to get going."

"Ah feel a wee better masel'."

And with an approving nod the dour Scotchman made his way below, again, where he already had a profane and vicious watch at work.

Orville returned to the bridge followed by the curious and malevolent stares of the seamen on the fo'csle head. The men had heard him talking with the cook.

One of their number, evidently the leader from the attention that was immediately given him, rolled over on his side and raised himself on his elbow, the straw mattress under him grating protest. He puffed slowly at his cigaret for a moment, and his black eyes narrowed.

"That old man's tough," he remarked. "He won't be so easy as the other fools. We'll have to——"

He left his sentence unfinished, but the rest seemed to understand perfectly. With two notable exceptions they all nodded their heads.

"I heard he was tough ashore last night. They said he was one of the hardest cases hereabouts. Said he'd only taken over the job jest fer fun," put in a seaman, evidently an Italian from his swarthiness and heavy, black, drooping mustache. An ugly scar disfigured his throat, and the scowl he gave as he spoke did not improve his appearance.

"We'll give him fun all right, Tony," softly laughed the man who had first spoken.

His comrades called him "Slim" Walker, but it was doubtful whether that was his name. He was a somewhat slender individual of no special nationality, one of those straws flung up from the pits of the Pacific coast cities, his father probably a drunken sailor and his mother a woman of the streets.

His black hair was long and sleek, and he kept it brushed back somewhat in the form of a pompadour. His little black mustaches were finely curled to a point, and his white teeth gleamed under them when he spoke.

His face was rather finely modeled. The features were small and well formed, the mouth especially coming rather to a sort of pout that gave him an almost girlish expression when in repose. In his eyes, dark, glowing, there lurked a gleam of what might have been cruelty. He was of medium height and very sinewy.

That he was not just what he seemed was apparent by the hold he appeared to have over the villainous, unshaven brutes who crowded on their mattresses round him and followed his words with care, while they panted in the growing heat of the new day under the heavy awnings above. But again there were two notable exceptions to those who crowded around Slim Walker.

"Are ye thinkin' of losing him?" asked a square-faced Irishman with a leer to his leader.

The dark young man frowned and looked swiftly about till his eyes, chancing to rest on the two men holding aloof, he sneered.

"Keep that mouth of yours closed, Murphy," he snarled, facing the Irishman again. "Do you want to get us hung? We shall see what we shall see when we get away from port. If there are no more new officers coming aboard I imagine the rest will be easy."

"Be easy," repeated Murphy with an ugly grin, running his hand across his mouth. "Sure it's dying fer a drink I am. An' t' think o' all that liquor in th' forehold."

He paused and licked his lips. His small, blue eyes gleamed.

"An' when the craft is ours, Slim, we c'n sail t' one of those islands I've heard tell of and get hold o' some girls, eh?"

"Maybe. But shut up. Do you want the world to hear? Quiet, you fool. You can drink and steal women later."

There was rasp in the young man's otherwise mellow voice that caused the Irishman to subside quickly with a quick look of fear. He joined in a muttering conversation with the man beside him. The rest of the crew, excepting for the two who always held aloof, listened to what Slim Walker had to say.

III

THE two men who held aloof sat by the after end of the iron windlass and dozed on their mattresses. They could not hear what was going on in the little group about the young leader, nor, truth to tell, did they particularly care. They knew, and knew that Slim Walker knew, that so long as they said nothing and made no attempt to interfere they were safe from harm.

They were perfectly aware of the young man's plot to seize the ship whenever possible and take her and her rich cargo to some little-known group of islands, where the rest of life could be spent in laughter and drink and song, perhaps murder, just as the mutineers of the old *Bounty* did in the long ago. And the two men who held aloof hoped—for Slim Walker had hinted as much—that when the thing was accomplished he would send them away safely in the whale-boat. They had to chance that he would keep his word.

And they dared not speak to outsiders, to the police for example, of what was going to happen. There was no evidence they could produce. Slim Walker had merely to deny everything. And there was also the very potent danger that they would not live very long after the speaking was done. Wherefore, being ordinary men with a fair love of life and no means to enable them to quit the *Ionia*, they just let things slide, trusting to luck and their own powers to pull them clear when the crisis came.

They had both been drugged and sent aboard the rusty old tramp by the crimps of the Barbary Coast, and it was therefore no choice of theirs that they were forced to work and live with about the choicest collection of thieves and murderers outside of Sing-Sing. In both men there were potentialities for good work and action. But they were both men who made good seconds in command but not good leaders. Given the right leadership, they were on the job with both feet.

They did not know that their hour of destiny had struck when the little wisp of a man in white, who they had been given to understand was the new skipper, came on the fo'csle head, clambering breathlessly up the iron companion from the foredeck. But they both rolled over and sat up and looked at Orville curiously when the sudden lull in conversation among the other seamen warned them that something was about to happen.

"Which of you men are in the port watch?" demanded the little millionaire testily.

Slim Walker drawled insolently, "We've forgotten," and then laughed, removing his cigaret from his mouth and blowing smoke upward into the new captain's face.

Orville snorted.

"Then it's time you started to remember! Stand up! The bunch of you stand up! And address me as 'sir.' Is that clear?"

"Aye, aye, sir."

Slim Walker stood up and stretched his arms above his head lazily. He yawned. He was full of confidence, knowing the men he had behind him; but he didn't want to drive things too far—yet. The *Ionia* was still within sight of the police launch.

"I suppose you're the —— leader! My son, if you broke Gillman's heart you won't break mine. Stand up, you dogs!"

The rest of them stood up. To refuse, as impulse prompted, was mutiny. That gave a master-mariner every right to run up the police flag and have them all sent to jail. On the high seas that gave the same master-mariner the right to put them in irons and if necessary to shoot them.

They had no intention of getting shot, or of giving the captain the opportunity to do so. They intended to mutiny, but it was to be in the terrible, subtle way that Slim Walker had devised—to dispose of all officers quietly. So they stood up sullenly.

Orville looked at them and grunted. They were indeed a tough-looking bunch. He did not wonder that the easily excitable and nervous Gillman had been driven half-insane with fright and had quit his job at the very first opportunity.

But that was all the better. Orville wanted action and he wanted it swift. What was the use of going to sea again unless he really made good against big odds? He'd show 'em ashore what he was made of.

There were nine seamen aboard the *Ionia*, including the two who always held aloof and who had now joined their standing shipmates. The rest of the men who had crowded round Slim Walker, and who now moved off to attend to their own business, were the two watches of firemen and greasers at present off duty.

Three of the seamen were Swedes, big, bony men with flaxen hair and high cheekbones, big-lipped and stolid, dressed in rough slop clothes, serges and blue-cotton shirts and jackets. Two seamen were Italians, dressed in cotton singlets and blue dungaree pants, very hairy as to arms and chests and boasting heavy drooping black mustaches and sly black eyes. Of the remaining four men one was Slim Walker, one the squat-faced Irishman Murphy, and two the two who had nothing in common with the rest.

One of the latter was a lean, tanned man with a sinewy figure and a heavily pockmarked shaven face. His arms were much tattooed; his throat was scrawny and big-tendoned, and his dark-sandy hair clung short-clipped to his somewhat big head. His nose was more of a beak, and his lips were big and grim. He seldom smiled. He was an American, one of those hard-bitten Yankees one meets occasionally in odd places at all sorts of odd times.

The remaining man could have been none other than a Britisher. He lacked the outward earmarks of keenness the Yankee possessed, and he was considerably shorter, though squarer built and more muscular. His face was burned a brick red, his slightly bald head was of the same color, and a close-clipped beard and brown mustache covered his obstinate chin and rather plump cheeks. His eyes were a deep blue—a contrast to the Yankee's, which were clear gray like Orville's—and were partly shaded from sight by a greasy blue peaked seaman's cap.

Like the Yankee he was dressed in a gray flannel shirt and a pair of blue serge Navy pants. He looked capable of acting but not of thinking. Unlike the Yankee he seldom spoke.

Of all the crew the above two were the only men who looked in any way like trustworthy beings. The rest all bore the earmarks of degeneracy and viciousness, save only Slim Walker, whose polished exterior probably hid a more vicious nature than was possessed of any of the men who feared and listened to him.

"We'll pick watches," Orville snarled when his scrutiny was over.

He jerked a note-book and pencil from his pocket and glared at his crew.

"You!"

He pointed abruptly at the Britisher, who stood with his hands half in his pants pockets looking uneasily around. The man started, stiffened slightly and, removing one of his hands, touched the peak of his cap.

"Yessir."

"You look fairly honest. How long have you been t' sea?"

"'Bout twenty years, sir."

"Steer?"

"Yessir."

"Been in sail or steam?"

"Little time in steam, sir. Some in sail and——"

"I know. What side of pinrail are tops'l halyards?"

"Fore and mizzen, sir?"

"Uh-huh."

"Port side."

"H'm! Seems all right."

Orville glanced significantly down at the naval pants.

"Where'd you get in your time?"

"Navy, sir. I'm a twelve-year man. I was with Sturdee when——"

"Ah, old-countryman. What in —— are you doing with this bunch of scum? Never mind. You'll do. You're mate of the *Ionia* from now on. You'll be addressed as 'sir' by all hands, and you'll draw the pay and eat the grub that goes with said rank. Pack up your dunnage and get on the bridge."

The Britisher's jaw dropped. He was not accustomed to having honors thrust upon him. Also he was fearful of responsibility. He shook his head and rubbed the back of his left hand nervously with his right.

"I don' know anything about navigation, sir, and——"

"That's all right. I do."

"I—I'd——"

He looked around on the lowering faces of his shipmates and shivered as he thought of what a rough job chief mate's would be. One or two of the seamen were fingering their knife-hafts suggestively.

Slim Walker looked at the prospective officer with hard eyes. He wouldn't have minded one of his own men as chief mate; but he knew that the Britisher, if he took the job, would be at least loyal to his superiors. He was that sort. Like an honest dog.

"I—I'd rather not, sir," the man concluded miserably.

He removed his cap and twisted it in his hands. He stared obstinately at the deck under his feet.

"Huh! Scared of this bunch of bums? What did you say you were? A Navy man? And from the old country? Don't tell me you're an Englishman. You're the first one I met yet that was scared anyway."

The man's face flushed redder than its normal fiery hue. He ceased to twist his cap. His eyes brightened, and the obstinate jaw of him came up stiffly, causing the pointed brown beard to stick out with an almost arrogant air.

"If you're putting it that way, sir—" he commenced stiffly.

"Good man! Get on the bridge," Orville snapped.

Then he turned to the rest of the silent crew with a snarl.

"Any other man here like to take second mate's job?"

Slim Walker started to come forward, but a bony hand reached for him and pulled him back. The Yankee elbowed to the front and stuck his hands in his belt. He spat with precision into the scuppers and then gave Orville look for look, ignoring a shrill oath from Walker, who had half-drawn his knife and recovered himself only in time to prevent the watchful Orville from shooting him.

"I never let a —— Britisher show me the way round a job yet," the Yankee stated forcibly, chewing his quid of tobacco with restless energy. "I'm scared of nothing that moves," he asserted further. "This gang here has had its own way so long mostly 'cause there ain't been a tough guy in charge as skipper of the old tin can. May I make application for that job as second mate, sir? I can guarantee action, double-barreled and with a jolt."

"Navy man?" asked Orville curiously, glancing down to see the naval pants again.

"Yep. I was with the Queenstown destroyers. We gummed——"

"Yes, I know. Get your dunnage 'midships. You're second mate from now on. What's the other man's name, the one I appointed mate?"

"Calls 'imself Joe Brown, sir. My label's Bud McKellip, born in Boston and one hundred per cent——"

"I can tell that. Get 'midships unless you'd care to pick your own watch. Good idea that. Here, Mr. Brown—" to the Britisher, who had just reappeared from below staggering under a heavy sea-bag—"come here and pick your watch."

"Aye, aye," the new mate muttered stolidly.

He lowered the sea-bag from his shoulder to the deck and, tilting back his cap for a moment, scratched his head. Then he pointed to the squat-faced Irishman as his first choice.

The Yankee spat overside and hitched his belt up a bit higher. He looked the sullen Slim Walker in the eye and grinned evilly.

"You reckon you're so tough you c'n eat cannon-balls and spit grape-shot, don't you? Wal, I'm taking you as my first man. I want tough 'uns. I've been waiting for a chance to beat up on some of you ginks. If I hadn't had t' sleep wi' you and knew you all had knives I'd have done it anyway. Now I've got a chance to get out of the fo'csle I'm taking advantage. Savvy? Then come here, whiskers."

Orville chuckled.

"I think I'm going to like that man," he murmured to himself.

"You—you—you," called Brown, and the men he called stood aside.

McKellip deliberately picked the men he knew were the toughest, while Brown with all the Britisher's dislike of a row just as deliberately avoided them. Orville entered up the names of both watches in his note-book so that there could be no argument.

"If you'll get your stuff 'midships and get smartened up, Mr. Brown and Mr. McKellip, I'd like to see you on the bridge in fifteen minutes," he said. "I shall want to talk with you."

He replaced his note-book in his pocket; and, pulling his white seaman's cap lower over his eyes, he glared at his sullen crew before he turned away.

"Now just understand, m' lads, there's going to be no nonsense while I walk the *Ionia's* bridge. Is that clear? The first man who refuses orders is going to find himself in a lot of trouble. Understand? This ship's going to Sydney, and she's getting there with her officers all alive if possible. If some of them don't get there it's more'n likely a good many of the crew won't either. I carry an automatic night and day, and I'm a blasted good shot. Just put that in your innards and digest it. C'm'long, Brown and McKellip!"

He turned on his heel and trotted to the break of the fo'csle head, dropping down the iron ladder with surprizing agility considering his age. He set off hastily for the bridge, nearly reaching it when the steam exhaust alongside the smokestack blew off with a tremendous hissing noise.

"THAT'S the chief with steam up," chirruped the little millionaire as he climbed to the navigation bridge and made for the brass mouthpiece of the speaking-tube to the engine room. He blew hard down the tube. The chief's slow voice drifted up.

"Hello. Do Ah unnerstan' ye're ready?"

"'Lo, chief. Aye, I'm ready. How you gettin' along for men down there?"

"Ye'll ken Ah'm doin' gran' when yer see me. Ma lef' arrm's in a slin' and ma shiftin'-spanner's dented soom, but ah have three compeetent engineers noo."

"Think you'll be able to manage for the voyage?"

"Aye. Ah have two or three mon Ah ken trust. Twa's Scotch and to'other's Ameericon. Sa he tells, anywa'. Ah ha' ma doots, though. The mon's a fearful accen' o' Wales. But he's no' a bad mon wi' reeciprocateen' engin's."

"Good! I have a real Yankee up here. All pep and go. Can't understand why the —— Gillman didn't make use of him. Well, see you later, chief. Le's have some steam in the windlass first, will you?"

"As ye say, sorr."

The chief plugged his end of the tube. Orville chuckled. The chief was carrying his arm in a sling. And his spanner was dented. There were quite a number of men aboard the *Ionia* the little millionaire was beginning to like.

There was a weak hail from alongside; and, crossing to the port wing of the bridge, Orville peered over. The exhausted cook looked up from the gig and let his oars drift.

"I've left the second ashore, sir," he called.

Orville chuckled. The cook's white coat lay at his feet; his sleeves were rolled up and his shirt front was open. Also he looked red-faced and hot.

"All right," Orville called down. "I'll send a couple of men to get that boat inboard."

The cook nodded and groaned.

Orville cupped his hands and shouted for the starboard watch to come and hoist the gig up, and they came unwillingly. Mr. Brown and Mr. McKellip came on the bridge just then, having placed their gear in their rooms and brushed up a bit.

"I don't want to know why you didn't give the police information about the killings of the officers on this ship before," Orville commenced to them. "I can understand your position. I'm taking it that you had nothing to do with that dirty work. But I'm impressing on you both, here and now, that it'll pay you to be loyal to your salt. You're officers, and you've got to act up to the job."

McKellip scratched his chin and grunted.

"When I want to kill a man I don't knife him after dark, nor do I pitch him over the wall when a heavy sea's running," he said. "And the reason I didn't tell the police anything was mainly 'cause I wanted to go on living."

"H'm. Reasonable."

"But you can bet your boots we're both for you, sir," the Yankee went on. "I like a man with guts, and I'll stand by him till the time comes for kicking off. Cap'n Gillman hadn't the notion how t' handle the gang for'ard. But with you and I and the limejuicer—beg pardon; Mr. Brown, sir—we ought t' make things hum."

"Let it go at that then," Orville decreed. "How about you, Mr. Brown?"

"I never killed a man, on his ship at least, sir," the Britisher said slowly. "And as for being loyal, why I've always done my best. I told Cap'n Gillman the crew was laying for the third mate, sir, but he laughed at me. That was before the rest of the killings started. I——"

"Did you know, sir, that that guy Walker is planning to get this lizzie and take her to some island or other? He's got the fellers all guyed up with talking 'bout island girls and booze and what-not. Wants to pull off another *Bounty* stunt. Huh! If they'd been on the South Sea beaches like I have they wouldn't hanker fer *kava* and the fat cows of Polynesia."

McKellip spoke hastily and with some scorn.

Orville grunted and swore.

"I'd imagined there was something of the sort brewing. But this ship's going to Sydney, and not all the seven seas nor the scum that sails them can stop her. Is that clear?

"Mutiny or no mutiny, this ship docks in Sydney. I don't give a —— if a dozen men get killed on the way. That's their lookout. And I charge you, McKellip, and you, Brown, that if I kick through you're to take this packet on. Understand?"

"Yessir," mumbled Brown.

"You've said it," snapped McKellip, and his gray eyes twinkled.

Orville grunted again.

"I'm getting thirsty," he said, "so le's get outa this hole. Can you lift up the hook, Mr. Brown?"

"Dunno, sir; I never tried."

"No? Well, I'll teach you later. Steer for now. Mr. McKellip, how about you?"

"I can lift anything," the Yankee asserted, and he shot a triumphant grin at the Britisher, who turned stolidly away.

Orville chuckled. He liked McKellip more and more.

"Go and do it," was apparently his motto.

"Then get for'ard and try," Orville snapped testily. "Use the port watch. Send the starboard watch below when they get that —— gig aboard. And if there's any back talk I'm standing by you if you crack any one's head. Is that clear? Good. All set?"

McKellip hitched his belt a bit higher and hurried for'ard. Orville tried the wheel and found that it worked all right. He squinted into the binnacle and assured himself that the compass was fairly true, as he could tell by virtue of certain well-known landmarks ashore. Then he crossed to the stained brass engine-room telegraphs and rang "Stand by" with a great deal of flourish.

He thrilled all over his sun-dried body. At last he was picking up the reins again.

From the amount of profanity that drifted from the fo'csle head it was apparent that McKellip had not the slightest idea as to how the anchor should be raised. But he was evidently learning as he went. The windlass groaned complainingly and turned with effort, and the cable clanked steadily down the hawse-pipes. Orville peered over the for'ard dodger of the bridge and cupped his hands round his mouth.

"Send a man in the chain-locker!" he bellowed to McKellip. "And heave up slower! Watch for the anchor stock and then quit heaving. I'll come and hoist her home. —— fool's liable to knock a hole in the ship's side," he grumbled to himself. "But by Jimminy, he's game."

Orville sounded three blasts of farewell on the *Ionia's* hoarse-lipped siren, and the rusty-sided, black-painted tramp swung her nose to seaward and swept out on the tide. The windlass stopped clanking after a while, and McKellip consulted the old gray-bearded carpenter as to how to hold the anchor in its place without keeping steam on the windlass.

Orville came along just then and explained the use of pawls and hooks and shackles and saved the new mate's face. But the Yankee was not at all embarrassed. He leaned over the fo'csle-head rail and peered at the heavy iron hook dangling from the rusty cable.

"Anyway I got her off the sand," he grinned back at Orville, who grunted and swung a maul on the pinch-bar the carpenter had inserted in the windlass to lock it with.

The watch stood around and glowered and wondered whether the night would give them a chance to straighten matters out once more. They had had a wonderfully easy time before they had reached Apia, when they had half of the captain's officers dead and Gillman himself scared stiff.

THE *Ionia*, her rusty black sides growing hot and blistering to the touch under the fierce glare of the rising morning sun, was barely out of sight of land when things began to happen.

One of the big Swede seamen was at the helm, standing on the low square grating behind the wheel in the little three-sided house, for'ard of the chart house that seemed to have been tacked on at the very last minute before the ship had left the ways twenty-five years before. The man's stolid, ox-like face, marred a trifle by dissipation and the effects of a terrible disease, was set grimly toward the brass binnacle inside which the compass-card swayed and trembled with every heave of the deck.

His jaws worked with monotonous precision as he chewed strong Copenhagen snuff, ceasing every now and then to expectorate with great care into the big cuspidor at his feet. He moved the wheel-spokes slowly, as if each were very heavy, though they came and went at his touch easily enough.

Mr. Brown had gone below till eight bells, and Mr. McKellip strode up and down the bridge with his hands clasped behind his back and his gray eyes sweeping the horizon as if he had been a watch officer for years.

Orville prowled about the bridge, now peering over the for'ard dodger down on the foredeck where the sullen watch was busy washing down, now walking right aft past the engineers' quarters and squinting at the hills of Samoa which were now a mere blur on the rim of the horizon. The engine-room whistle rang sharply, piercingly.

McKellip stopped short and stared around and scratched his chin. He looked doubtfully toward the brass mouthpiece of the tube and wondered whether he was supposed to answer it. Orville came back just then, jog-trotting from aft, and removed all doubts in the new mate's mind.

"Why in —— don't you see what the chief wants?" he snarled aggressively, and then went to see himself.

McKellip grunted and continued his vigorous promenade. He did not take offense. He understood Orville better perhaps than any one aboard, excepting only Mackenzie and——

"Tha' ye, sorr? Ah sen' a mon t' grease th' steerin'-gear not a momen' back, and the chiel's coom to me scairt o' his life. He says there's a mon in th' wheel-hoose, a great mon wi' yellow hair an' a voice like a bull. Ma mon hasna been drinkin' either. Will ye see? Ah've ma spanner still, deespi' th' den', if ye need it."

"What! Stow'way! Need you? No, chief. Leave the scallywag to me. Huh! I'll show the blasted bum where *he* gets off at. Thanks, chief. By."

Orville jammed back the plug with a snort. He whirled on the now gaping and listening McKellip.

"You watch the ship," he snarled. "The chief says his man ran against a stowaway in the wheel-house aft. I'll show him! Stow'way on my ship! Skunk! I'm going to beat up on him, McKellip. Is that clear? Sha'n't—be—long!"

By the time the last word was out the little millionaire was gone, down the companion to the well-deck aft and racing along for the poop, beneath which the wheel-house was located. His sandy mustache was bristling with anger, and his gray eyes flamed. He flung open the iron door of the wheel-house with a crash and stamped inside.

"You scum!" he bellowed. "What the —— do you think this is? I want to ——"

Then he stopped and gaped foolishly and glared from under the peak of his white seaman's cap.

Jack Peterson calmly finished lighting his cigar. He flung the match away and rose with a yawn from the upturned fire-bucket he had been sitting on in preference to the greasy floor.

"Hello, sir," he said with a grin, stretching himself like a lazy lion and puffing gently at his smoke.

Orville went off abruptly.

"I will not have it, sir! Do you understand? Is that clear? I refuse to have it! Am I not boss of my own life? Am I? Answer me; answer me, sir. No —— lies, now! Not one!

"Did I not tell you to go to ——? I mean, the Hebrides! Eh? Then what the —— are you doing here? You're fired! Is that clear? You're fired! Get out of my sight!"

"Yes, sir. But I told you I was coming on the *Ionia* with you if you persisted in going."

"You're not! I'm going to turn straight back to Apia and put you ashore. Is that clear? Defy me, would you? Like your —— cheek! Never again will I pick up a bum from the beaches and put him——

"Jackie, Jackie, what did you want to come for? Can't you see you've spoilt everything? They'll all be saying ashore that I took you along 'cause I was afraid to handle the gang for'ard."

"They'd better not let me hear 'em," grunted Peterson darkly.

He crossed to the little millionaire and put a great arm round his shoulders. Orville looked like a small angry boy alongside a big comforting policeman.

"They won't say anything of the sort," soothed the yellow-haired giant. "I'll tell them I stowed away on you. Aren't you just a bit glad I came along, sir?"

"No, I'm not. —— it, sir, do you realize you have defied me? How am I to keep discipline on this ship when you're aboard? You never do anything I tell you. You're fired! Is that clear?

"Now you're aboard you can come as a passenger, but you'll have to pay for your passage; and I want it thoroughly understood that there must be no interfering in ship's work.

"Take that great fist off my shoulder. Take it off! Now get for'ard where you belong. No, not the fo'csle. You can have the third mate's room. I refuse to say anything more."

Peterson moved away and grinned. He rubbed his great hands together and looked at Orville fondly.

"You're too fragile and liable to blow up to be trusted with fire," he remarked. "I'm glad I came anyway. But say, can't you find me a job as mate? I can't hang around all the trip, and I know you sailed without officers. I saw you send the second ashore."

"Impossible! Impossible! Utterly impossible! I have a fully licensed and capable first officer and a thoroughly capable second officer."

"That's queer. I don't remember hearing there were any such men in the crew."

"I'm not asking what you remember. Now get out of here. I can't have stowaways cluttering up my tidy wheel-house."

Peterson looked at the greasy floor, littered with pieces of black, oily waste and grinned, but said no more. He passed out of the house with its clanking, hissing machinery and walked along the after well-deck by the side of Orville, who fussily mopped his streaming brow with a white silk handkerchief and broke anon into mutterings of anger that his express commands should be disobeyed.

IV

THE two men went up the companion from the well-deck to the engineers' quarters and so on to the bridge, where McKellip eyed the yellow-haired giant, who had apparently materialized from out of thin air, with unbounded astonishment. Such a big man would have drawn attention anywhere; but on the small navigation bridge of the *Ionia* he was especially conspicuous, appearing to take up all the available room.

Orville led the way without comment to the door of the chief mate's cabin, and, knocking shortly, went inside with Peterson at his heels, a puzzled frown on the giant's good-natured face. Mr. Brown was methodically arranging his things about the room, and he looked up at the intruders without a change of expression. He laid down the much patched pair of blue dungaree pants he was folding and came forward, rubbing one hand over his half-bald head.

"Sir?"

"Ah, Mr. Brown. This is Mr. Peterson. Peterson, this is Mr. Brown. If you still'd rather not take the mate's job, Brown, I'd like Mr. Peterson to have it," Orville grunted shortly.

Peterson grinned to himself and whistled under his breath. But he couldn't turn another man out like that.

"Aw, I don't want to—" he commenced good-naturedly.

"Shut up!" Orville snarled and then went on talking to Mr. Brown, who was now scratching his head and thinking very deeply to judge by the worried look in his eyes. Orville said:

"It will give us a chance to have three watches. You can take the third's job. Mr. Peterson here has a master's ticket and is better able to handle— You see?"

"Aye, aye, sir. I wasn't thinkin' of that. But you understand I'm not leaving the berth because I'm afraid? If you think so I'd rather stick it and——"

"—— it, Brown, I know you're not afraid! That's all right, man. Get your dunnage together again and move into the third's room. It's only next door, so it won't take you long. Jack, would you mind stepping outside and calling the steward?"

Peterson, still grinning, did as he was bidden and returned to the room again. Orville was helping the harassed Mr. Brown to get his things together, and from the slightly flushed look on the latter's face it was evident that he was quite embarassed by the honor of having a ship's captain aid him.

"Sure you don't mind my sort of kicking you out of the job?" Peterson asked him anxiously.

He did not know how Mr. Brown had come to be appointed, and it seemed to him hardly according to the etiquette of seamen to depose one another in such a summary fashion.

"No, no, sir. That's all right. I'm only too glad that you are taking over the job."

The man looked genuinely hurt that such a question should be asked. Naturally he thought Peterson was quite aware how he had come to his rank. Orville broke in testily and with a snort:

"That's all right. You two needn't discuss it. I'll do that. I pay wages aboard here, and I appoint and derate officers as I choose. Just attend to business that's all. From now Mr. Brown is third officer while you, Peterson, are chief mate. Is that clear? Ah, steward!"

The white-jacketed steward had just appeared in the doorway, his eyebrows raised in the expectation of an order.

"Yessir," the man said.

He had learned from the cook that it was best not to ignore the "sir" as had been done more or less frequently with Captain Gillman.

"Ah! H'm! Three glasses and a bottle of Scotch. And, steward!"

"Yessir!"

"Is there any ice aboard?"

"No, sir. Ship doesn't carry a freezer."

"Uh! Any soda-water?"

"Yessir; four cases."

"Good. Bring a couple of bottles with the Scotch. And, steward, just see the bottle you bring is full. And don't you ever attempt to take a drink. Is that clear?"

"Yessir," said the steward and went away with an aggrieved look, for he had just been thinking, when he heard what the skipper wanted, what a fine chance it was for him to take a drink.

There was no doubt about it that the new "old man" was a sly bird. One to be watched.

The steward was back within five minutes, as soon as he had got the Scotch from the lazaret under the main saloon, and Orville poured the drinks himself.

"This climate never did agree with me," he complained querulously. "And I haven't had a chance to get a drink since the blasted ship sailed. Here's how!"

He tilted his glass and did not speak again until it was empty. Peterson took his liquor weak and sipped it with care. Mr. Brown wiped his mouth first with the back of his hand and then drank methodically, each gulp he took as measured as the last. At the finish he wiped his mouth again and smacked his lips faintly.

The way the three men set their glasses down was an index to their character. Orville jarred his violently on the table. Peterson handed his to the steward, who stood waiting with the tray, while Mr. Brown very carefully set his glass on the tray itself.

The steward went away with his burden, wondering whether Orville would notice if he took a drink from the bottle. It was easy to fill it to the old mark with water, but it might be the "old man's" taste was keenly developed and he would find the weakness. The steward shook his head mournfully as he remembered the cook's experience and decided he would not chance it.

"Well, you can shift in here as soon as Mr. Brown's through," Orville remarked to Peterson. "I suppose you've got no clothes with you."

"Oh, I left a sea-bag in the wheel-house," corrected the yellow-haired giant with the flicker of a grin.

"You did, did you? —— sure you were going to stay aboard, weren't you? You'll get the surprize of your life bucking me one of these days."

Orville snorted and glared and breathed hard on his wisp of mustache.

"C'm 'long on deck," he snarled.

Leaving Mr. Brown to move his things, the two men went on to the navigation bridge again, where Orville accosted Mc Kellip.

"This's new mate, 'Kellip, Mr. Peterson. Peterson, this's 'Kellip. Yankee, tough, profane, capable. Shake."

"Gosh, you've some body to ye, man!" said the *Ionia's* second mate with real admiration as he lost his hand inside Peterson's and ran his eye over the other's wonderful breadth and physique. "I thought I was tough myself, but I'm blamed if I'd care to mix with you."

"Strongest man in the West Pacific," Orville crowed triumphantly, slapping Peterson across the chest with the back of his thin bony hand. He was always elated when any one praised his protégé. He had picked him broke off the beaches of Samoa and made him a favored employee. Apart from the fact that he regarded the yellow-haired giant in much the same manner as a horseman regards a magnificent racer, his hobby being men, he also loved the man for his own sake, and because of what lay between them—many a hot skirmish and many a little battle against each other and again together.

"What about the limejuicer?" inquired McKellip after a pause.

"He's takin' the third's place. That'll allow you all to make a three-watch ship of it. Four on an' eight off's better'n four on and four off."

"That's so. Hello, eight bells! Brown's watch. Where is he?"

"Huh? Brown? Packing to shift over rooms. Never mind. You get below; I'll take the bridge till Brown comes. Just drop in and tell him not to hurry. He can eat before he comes up, and set his room straight."

"Aye, aye, sir."

McKellip touched his cap and turned away to speak to Brown and have a smoke before going to eat in the main saloon, where the steward was already laying the plates and silver.

"Good man, that 'Kellip," muttered Orville, rubbing his hands together as Peterson and he paced across the bridge.

The little millionaire pulled out a cigar from his pocket and lit it. He made to pass one to Peterson but withdrew it from the young giant's fingers as a thought struck him.

"No!" he said decisively. "It's bad for discipline for officers to smoke on watch. What about me? —— it, sir, I'm the owner! I'm privileged. Is that clear? Then don't ask such —— foolish questions. Hello, what's this?"

"THIS" was a party of three men, the watch that had been below and had come on deck at eight bells. They should have been relieving the watch that was washing down on the foredeck. But instead they were approaching the bridge, their leader, Slim Walker, bearing in his hands a tin kit full of what looked like food.

"Complaint about the grub, sir, I expect," murmured Peterson with understanding.

He had once been an able seaman himself. Orville snorted and glared.

"Complaint! So soon! I'll show 'em where they get off at. Grub that's good enough for me is good enough for them. I found from the steward a while back that fore and aft fed the same on this packet Complaint! Huh!"

There was something of a sneer on Slim Walker's face as he came on the bridge, his two watch companions at his heels. He stopped short at the sight of Peterson, no doubt wondering where the giant had come from, and a slightly worried look crossed his eyes.

Next moment it was gone. He had recovered his poise and was advancing once more. He thrust the tin kit under Orville's nose, causing the little millionaire to blink and step back half a pace.

"See that? It's bad, sir. Canned mutton and spuds. We've complained to the cook, and he said we'd have to see you. What about it? We can't work unless we eat good grub."

"Oh you can't, can't you! Well, well. That's too bad"

Orville leaned forward and sniffed at the kit. He eyed the food searchingly and glared intently at the chaos of mutton. It smelled quite all right. It looked all right. It *was* all right.

He snorted and puffed hard at his cigar. He looked sharply into Slim Walker's eyes and detected the sneer there

"That stuff's good. What you trying to do? Starting trouble without cause? Get below. I'll see the cook later."

"Well, we can't eat it," returned the other insolently.

Orville glared at him and roared.

"Say 'sir' to me, —— it!"

And with a quick movement he knocked the kit up into Slim Walker's face. The man staggered back with an oath, his companions falling away one on each side of him. Canned mutton adhered to his face and throat, ruining his shirt and the curl of his mustaches. Mashed potatoes clung to his arms. He clawed his eyes clear and snarled like a wild beast, his smooth manner gone as grass goes before the forest fire.

"You —— swine," he shouted, interrupting Orville who was saying:

"—— your insolence! Get out of my sight! Eat? I'll give you bread and water for the rest of the trip. Don't stand there spitting like a drunken Russian. Get off my bridge. I've a mind——"

Just then the other got his knife clear and sprang with deadly intent, so quickly that the little millionaire was taken off his guard for a moment and stepped back a pace while he reached at his hip with his right hand. For a fraction of a second it looked as if he was about to die.

Then Peterson acted. His great fist reached over the little man's shoulder and met Slim Walker's face, the fearful crack of the impact being heard even by the unrelieved watch below on the fore well-deck.

Slim Walker's head went back with a jerk. Suddenly checked in his rush, he toppled sidewise. His delicate-shaped nose was smashed flat. The blood flew wide.

The two men who had come on the bridge with him cowered away in fear. They had not seen treatment like this meted out by Captain Gillman or his officers. It was terrible. They did not even dare to flee.

Slim Walker picked himself up very slowly He wiped the blood from his face and slipped his knife back in its sheath. He felt his nose and knew that women would never call him handsome again. Dazedly he stared his hate at Peterson, ignoring Orville altogether.

"Get off my bridge!" the little millionaire was bellowing, flourishing his automatic.

The two uninjured seamen came to life at that and fled in haste, falling down the companion to the well-deck, where the watch washing down met them and plied them with scared questions.

Peterson was grinning a little and rubbing the knuckles of his left hand. He had hit harder than he had intended. It is a fearful thing to disfigure a man for life.

Slim Walker looked at him for nearly a minute. Then he said very distinctly—

"For that——"

His meaning was clear.

Nor was his voice loud. It was quiet, almost smooth again. He was quite calm. He turned to walk away, but the voice of Orville checked him. The little millionaire was hard to stop once he got going.

"Hi! Where the —— do you think you're off to? Come here!"

Slim Walker hesitated for a moment and then turned and waited. He wanted desperately to go below to the friendly cool and shelter of the fo'csle where he could lie down in his bunk and nurse his split face. He was in frightful pain. But burning anger made him endeavor to keep up an appearance of indifference before the young giant who had struck him so terribly.

"Clean up that mess!" bellowed Orville. "Do you think I can have the bridge messed up like that?"

"Very well."

"Very well, 'sir!'"

"Very well, sir."

"Now get a cloth and a bucket off the steward and wipe up that mess. And when you've done that take that kit back to the cook. Then you can get to work washing down below."

"But my face, sir. Mayn't I go below and——"

A little of his pride deserted the man. He whimpered slightly. Orville interrupted him.

"You may not. I don't care if you have no face. You came up here and got that after eight bells. It is your watch on deck. All injuries received through your own carelessness during your watch on deck you'll kindly attend to during your watch below. Is that clear?"

Bloody, dizzy, Slim Walker staggered away to the steward, of whom he borrowed a cloth and a bucket. He filled the latter with sea-water by means of a heaving line over the side, and then set to work to clean the bridge. He scraped off of himself what canned mutton and potatoes he could and let the rest dry.

The heart was out of him momentarily. He had intended the complaint about the food to be a preliminary to a course of complaints that should drive the new captain to distraction and make him attempt something that should give the crew the chance to be in the right against him.

Slim Walker knew that that would go a long way to make the mutiny he was planning a success. If the men once believed themselves in the right they would do just as he told them. But he had not reckoned on the yellow-haired giant turning up so unexpectedly.

Every time the man looked at Peterson and Orville his battered eyes blazed their hatred. If he had had any qualms about disposing of the *Ionia's* officers before, which was doubtful, he certainly had none now. Henceforward Slim Walker was out for blood and for blood alone, and, should he forget for one little moment in the days to come, he had only to look in a mirror to see the face that would make his hatred flame anew.

When he had finally cleaned up the

bridge to Orville's grunted satisfaction he returned the bucket and cloth to the grinning steward and then made his way below to the foredeck, where he seized a broom and went on with the washing down. He had had an idea that he might be able to sneak below to the fo'csle and wash up a bit; but Orville, who knew exactly what was passing in his mind, kept a sharp lookout from the bridge to see that he did nothing of the sort.

* * *

"WE'D better not leave the bridge, either of us, after dark," Peterson observed a little grimly.

Orville snorted and glared down at the busy watch.

"That scum ain't got my goat yet. I go where and when I like on this ship, night or day."

"Yep. But knives are hard to see in the dark. And some men c'n throw straight."

Peterson paused for awhile and allowed his gaze to drift from the foredeck away to the horizon, where a smudge of smoke lifting and falling very slowly told of some other steamship plowing along on her voyage.

"You'll remember how the officers disappeared on this ship during the run from Frisco," he resumed. "You haven't taken the trouble to find things out. But I have. I happen to know that every man disappeared in the night. Also every man, save only the bosun, was last seen walking aft. You'll savvy that a man knifed, say in the dark alley under the poop deck and flung overside into the noisy wake, wouldn't stand a ghost of a show."

"That's true. But I go heeled all the time. Don't worry. I'm shooting first and asking questions afterwards if any one tries to get near me in the dark. Is that clear?"

"Aye. But the man who knifes you you never see or hear till you feel the steel," said Peterson dryly.

He transferred his gaze from the smoke-smudge on the horizon to the face of his employer and friend.

"Mind yourself," he grunted.

"And what's more—" Orville took up the challenge shrilly—"I'm going to have all hands on this packet so —— scared by the time we reach Sydney that they'll be just itching to jump ship. They won't wait for transportation back to Frisco. They'll be glad just to get away from me.

"Did I ever tell you about the *Walli*, Peterson? No? It was about eighteen years ago. She was a big three-masted bark, carrying skys'ls. Only bark I was ever in that did that.

"The crew mutinied one day off the Diego Ramirez near the Magellans. They killed the two mates and ripped open the sailmaker.

"They tried the same actions on the skipper, but he got mad and went into them shooting. If I remember rightly he used a thirty-eight revolver of some new-fangled make and a heavy forty-five some Shanghaied cowboy left behind when he jumped ship at Fray Bentos. The thirty-eight would jam about every other shot, but the forty-five worked dandy. I——"

"What were you on that packet? One of the crew that mutinied?"

"One of what? —— your soul, no! I was the skipper! Huh! Cleaned out the whole works. Eight men dead before nightfall; three wounded. Never had a scratch m'self. Made Callao four weeks later with four men in irons and the rest so scared they jumped when their own shadow caught their eye."

Mr. Brown came up on the bridge just then and, coming forward, touched his cap as a sign he was ready for duty. Orville grunted and pitched his burned-out cigar overside.

"All set, Mr. Brown?"

Mr. Brown nodded gravely.

"I have put my things in the third mate's room, sir. And I have eaten dinner."

"Well, well, we'll get below and eat ourselves. Keep a sharp lookout for ships, and keep an eye on the watch on deck. If you see any funny stuff pulled just call me. Is that clear? I'll be in the saloon for a while."

"Yessir. If I see anything I'm to call you."

"That's it. You can steer, of course. Well, the course is west by south a half west. Got that? There's a man at the wheel, but you'll be expected to see he keeps her head on. Understand? Good. That's all, then. C'm 'long, Peterson; let's eat and drink."

On their way down to the main saloon, where lunch was being served, the two men met Mackenzie. He was on his way to the saloon himself, the chief engineer of the

Ionia eating with the deck officers while his assistants had a mess room of their own. The same old dour look was on his face, though the clean blue serge uniform suit he had changed into for the meal improved his appearance somewhat.

There was a large lump over his right eye and a long cut, covered with court plaster, down his right cheek. Also his left arm he was carrying in a sling formed of a black silk scarf.

He smiled sourly when he caught sight of Orville and curled his flaming mustache with the grease-grimed fingers of his right hand. He looked inquiringly at Peterson, who topped him by at least five inches.

"Who's th' chiel wi' ye, sorr?" he said in his rasping voice.

"Ah, chief. Meet the new mate of this tub, Mr. Peterson. This is Mackenzie, the chief engineer."

The two men shook hands.

"Pleas' t' meet ye, sorr," the chief grunted.

Peterson nodded at the sling.

"Tough work below, chief?"

"Moderate, moderate. But ye'll ken Ah've steam oop still? By th' by, sorr, Ah've somethin' t' show ye."

This to Orville, who perked up his head at the words that followed.

"If ye'll coom alon' by th' skyli' Ah'll gi' ye a view o' somethin' that'll reequire a deal o' explainin' sh'd th' authoritees hear aught. Min', A'hm countin' on ye."

"You can," Orville snapped. "You can count on me to the last skull, if that's what you're talking about. What is it?"

"Skulls is ri' eno'."

The chief led way along the bridge deck to where the glass-paned engine-room skylight stood, with an iron coaming perhaps two feet above the deck itself. He went round to the after end and stopped by a heap of hatch canvas that had been flung against the coaming. Bending, he flung back the first layer to reveal the body of a man, an unshaven, villainous-looking fellow with a scrubby mustache and growth of black beard, his once gray flannel shirt and blue dungaree pants black with coal-dust and oil.

Peterson bent quietly and touched the grimy forehead and then started slightly and shot a quick look at the motionless chief, whose peculiar slaty eyes were gleaming strangely.

"Is he dead?" inquired Orville with a grunt, lighting another cigar.

The chief grunted in return and scratched his chin.

"Ye canna make a den' in a twel'-in' spanner wi'out doin' some mighty damage. Ah foun' him tryin' t' slice open ma donkeemon's head with a shovel-edge. Then he swun' on me—" the chief touched the long strip of court plaster running down his right cheek—"an' then Ah got home wi' ma spanner. Ye'll ken he croaked sudden. Ah had him hauled oop thro' th' skyli' an' lef' here."

"And the rest of the men?" said Orville with a queer little catchy laugh.

The adventure was certainly beginning to move swiftly.

The chief blinked slowly and twirled his mustaches before replying. He looked for a long time down on the dead man, and when he did finally speak his voice was rather low but as harsh as ever.

"They w's part mad an' part scairt. B't they came on. Losh, mon, there w's hot times for a few momen's. B't ye'll see the steam is oop yet, an' the engin's reeciprocatin' gran'."

"I like to fight with the open sky above me and the open deck around," observed Peterson dryly. "You must have your nerve, chief, to go down in that crowded engine-room when you know those murderous devils are lurking for you behind every stanchion and waiting for you behind the bulkheads when you pass into the stokehole. How do you guard your back?"

"Ah jes' keep a lookout, and Ah have one or twa guid men down there. 'Tis simple when ye're again' a wall an' forced t' do sich. Though 'tis a shame that a mon who's his chief's ticket sho'd have t' stan' his watch below an' get his han's greased oop. Never since Ah've been a secon' have Ah woorked th' like. But Ah'll stick it, Ah'll stick it. Ye'll ken that when men strive t' scairt me Ah get kin'a mad. Ye'll obsarve there's one mon dead; but th' steam's oop, the steam's still oop."

"H'm. That's so. You're a man who knows his job, chief. Pull the canvas back over the poor ——'s face. I'll send a couple of men t' sew him up this afternoon——"

"A good job to scare that man who tried to knife you," Peterson put in. "That'd give him some idea what he's in for if he tried any funny stuff."

"Sometimes, Peterson, I think you have a few brains in that fat head of yours. See what being with me has done? Le's see, chief; we'll enter the log as Gillman had to enter for his officers, 'Presumed drowned.' Will that do?"

"Aye, tha'll do, sorr."

"All right then. You might find out about this man's wife or relatives or whoever he's got waiting for him. He doesn't deserve it, but I'll look after them. Well, well, le's get along to the saloon. I'm thirsty."

Orville jammed his cigar to one corner of his mouth and grunted. Then between Peterson and the lean chief he made his way to the saloon, looking like a small bush between two giant oaks. It was not long before his querulous voice could be heard from the open ports above the deeper hum of conversation between his companions:

"Steward! Whisky and soda! Jump now, my man! Lord, Lord, this climate never did agree with me. Not so much soda, you bloomin' fool!"

V

IN THE fo'csle, toward the end of the second dog watch, Slim Walker sat at one end of the white-scrubbed table that was held by wedges thrust through holes in the wooden stanchions up which it could be slid out of the way when not in use. The man's face was bruised fearfully and a rough bandage was wrapped right around his head just below his bloodshot eyes and just above his little black mustache. He was pale with worked-up passion, and his hands kept opening and closing spasmodically on the table before him. His voice was tense.

"We'll get them all between now and tomorrow night."

He concluded what had been quite a long speech with his lips curling from his white teeth in an ugly snarl.

His listeners nodded. All the seamen were below except the man at the wheel and the one on the fo'csle-head lookout. Work on deck finished at five o'clock as was the custom, and only wheels and lookouts were kept at night, though any man whose watch it was was supposed to stand by in case the bridge officer wanted anything done.

With the removal of the Yankee and the Britisher to become officers the seamen, seven of them, were now solid behind their leader. Even the firemen were with him, crowding into the sailors' fo'csle to hear him speak and plan.

The whole crew had been supplied by the San Francisco crimps, and they had been supplied during a great shortage of labor, especially seafaring labor. They were mostly from the lowest of the Barbary Coast dives, the sweepings of the pits of vice, and they were ready for anything that would get them out of hard work.

Also Slim Walker, the most cultured of them all and claiming to understand navigation, had promised them a life of sensual ease among the islands if they backed his plans. He reminded them of the island women, voluptuous, pretty, plentiful; of the sleepy, coral-fringed lagoons and the wind-bent palms, the moonlit nights and the scents of a thousand flowers.

Was it not all better than a return to the bitter North? Was it not worth while risking a subtle, safe mutiny for?

If the firemen at least had had doubts about it before they had none now. Most of them had been badly bruised up in the terrific fight that morning in the stokehole, when the chief had walked into them with his beloved spanner. They had kicked at being driven to raise stream. They were not fond of hard work. They had grown insolent.

By disposing quietly of their engineers during the run from 'Frisco and thoroughly scaring the rest of the ship's officers left alive, they had been able to do pretty well much as they pleased. And they were not prepared for the chief's change of front, which occurred as soon as the Scotchman found out he had a good man on the bridge above him, a man he could depend on to see him through in case of killings.

Captain Gillman had been too soft-hearted, not at all the sort of captain to skipper rough men, and the chief had become indifferent under him. Orville had given him a new lease of energy, arousing his pride again, and the firemen suffered. Wherefore they were ready now and solid behind Slim Walker, who was pointing to them a way to ease and pleasure with never need to work again.

It had been Walker's hope to be able to

take over the *Ionia* before she reached Apia and could get fresh officers. A miscalculation in the time for the run had foiled him, though he had come very near to success, with only the chief engineer and the captain and a drunken second mate in his way. But still he had been foiled; and, managing to keep the crew sufficiently under control to hold together against shrewd questions from the police regarding the death of so many ship's officers, he had been able to lay plans to continue on her voyage.

It should be understood that, except in the case of the mate, there had been no direct evidence to connect up the *Ionia's* crew with the disappearance of her officers. The men who said the crew were to blame knew they were.

One look at the crew was sufficient. But men can not be brought into court because they look like murderers. And not one seaman or fireman dropped a hint of what he knew. Slim Walker had threatened them with dire threats should they forget themselves and do so.

He had been aided in his desire for silence by the fact that the *Ionia* anchored out in the harbor and few of the crew could get ashore. Walker saw to it that such as did were men he knew he could trust as much as he could trust anybody.

It was a very careful and subtle plan he had worked out to get control of the *Ionia* and her rich cargo. The idea of a mutiny being carried on by stealth was his own special idea.

He would not chance an open attack. The officers had firearms, and the law gave them the right to shoot in the event of any disobeying of orders. The caliber of the crew was such that they would give in and desert their leader should they be called upon to face grim-lipped, determined men fully prepared to kill. This Slim Walker knew. Wherefore he had devised his mutiny to take the turn it had.

Slim Walker's real name does not matter, except that it was well known to the police of the Pacific coast. The man himself had not had any premeditated idea of taking the *Ionia* when he came aboard. He made a precarious living variously in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Portland as a hotel thief. Innately he craved better things, but being averse to hard labor chose easy ways of getting them. Nor was he any too particular of his methods.

It was his habit to mix with the best class of people he could wriggle into the graces of, and his expenditures on clothes and traveling kept him in a state of more or less extreme penury.

Besides his inner craving for better things than he had been born to, he also desired leadership and power. He hated to be otherwise than always in the limelight. Possessing little talent for leadership, apart from a total lack of self-consciousness, he stepped into place as leader in whatever company he chanced to find himself, while far more capable men, possessing less audacity, retired to the obscure background.

He had been Shanghaied while visiting the notorious "Thalia" on the Barbary Coast of the great bay city, and had awaked twelve hours later to find himself dressed in nondescript garments, listed as an able seaman on board the *Ionia* and signed on under the name of Slim Walker. He also found he was expected to do what he had never done before in his life and what he abhorred above all else—physical labor. Also he was expected to obey the rigid rules and conform to the discipline of the merchant marine. The reaction was instant and terrible.

It was only natural that such a man, thrown into such an environment, should take leadership with his old audacity, finding his companions illiterate men with a great respect for learning, real or assumed, and as clay in his hands. It was natural he should think of a way to assert his new-found power and to escape his virtual prison.

He saw the possibilities of the thing the more he thought it over. The *Ionia* was worth a large fortune with her rich cargo. If he could get her for himself——

Mutiny by stealth was unique and safe, almost absurdly simple. It was so easy to get rid of a body. The sea solved that vital problem.

Personally Slim Walker had never killed, though that was from fear of discovery more than dislike of taking life. He could easily persuade other men to kill. For himself he would kill only when hot anger took control of his faculties, which was seldom, or when he saw no possibility of being found out.

He had been through the South Seas once as the guest of a man who had a friend in possession of a yacht and whose confidence he had for a short time held. That was during one of the long vacations he took when he happened to have accumulated enough stolen wealth to enable him to pose as a gentleman of means.

His acquaintances at such times knew him under a name entirely unlike either Slim Walker or his real name. His absences from the set he liked to move in were vaguely understood to be caused by business pressure, though just what that business pressure was no one knew. Which was perhaps as well.

Acquainted therefore a little with the Pacific, finding himself the virtual leader of a large body of scoundrels to whom human life was cheap and whose idea of pleasure could be solely summed up in women and whisky, he naturally sought to give rein to his craving for power and his desire to be wealthy and able to become permanently one of the set he liked. To him the wealth of the *Ionia* represented great opportunity.

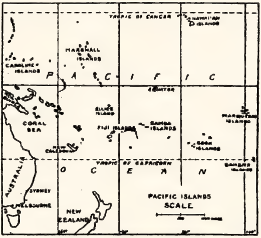
Like most tramp ships, the little vessel carried no wireless. She merely left one port and disappeared into the blue vastnesses of sea and sky for a specified time. After which she reappeared at her destination.

And tramp ships that never reappeared were put down first as "Overdue," later as "Missing" and later still as "Presumed Foundered with All Hands," or something similar. So the chapter closed.

Warships were seldom sent in search of obscure tramp ships. A ship never became a tramp until she was too old and leaky for anything else, well-nigh on the verge of being condemned by the inspectors. It was reasonable to suppose that such ships as never turned up at port had foundered at last as pessimistic underwriters had probably for long predicted.

The wide Pacific was largely a virgin field. Few steamships crossed it except along the regular trade-lanes which were as rigidly drawn as any land highway. Tramp ships moved to one side of these lanes, the officers on such craft not caring for the stress and haste necessitated by vessels taking the regular routes. To do so meant that sharp lookouts would have to be kept, that night collisions became alarming possibilities. Such routes were fine for the crack ocean greyhounds of the world, but the little freighters preferred to plod their own lonely way across the sea.

Wherefore it was unlikely that the *Ionia* would sight a ship until she drew near Sydney. And once the officers were killed off, perhaps Walker's own men appointed in their places, it would be easy for the man who understood a little navigation, as Walker did, to run for some reported uninhabited island in a little-frequented archipelago and there hide the ship.



The presence of some five thousand pounds in silver bars in the captain's room made the prospect of taking the ship all the more alluring. The bullion was destined for a private jewelry concern in Australia, and Walker had heard of it one day from the former drunken second mate. The stuff had been taken ashore in Apia when Captain Gillman had quit but had been brought back by Matthews' men when Orville had taken over the ship.

Exactly what he would do after hiding the stolen ship Slim Walker had not yet fully decided. He had an idea that he could cause the crew to fight among themselves and kill one another off.

The liquor would help him there, he knew. There were several dozen cases in the forehold. Once drunk, the seamen and firemen would become quarrelsome, and it would be easy to arrange things so that knives were drawn.

Walker had no relish for sharing with too many the wealth of the *Ionia*. A chosen few he would keep with him, and the rest they would dispose of as they had disposed of the former officers of the *Ionia*, by stealth. Then a voyage to some lonely port in the ship's long-boat, a tale of wreck and of drifting for days in the sea, and later, after suspicion had been allayed, a chartered schooner and the gradual removal of the *Ionia's* rich cargo. Perhaps even the ship itself could be changed and camouflaged and sold under a new name.

Not that Walker worried much about that yet. He had mapped but the vague outlines of the future. For he was essentially a man of the moment. He did not care to look too far ahead.

The main thing to him was first to get possession of the *Ionia* and to aim for that goal in such a way that should things turn out against him there would be nothing definitely to connect him with the plot. He wanted to play for big odds, but he wanted to play very safe. And doubtless he would have stuck to his original intention but for the fact of the blow Jack Peterson had struck him. Rage obscured caution then.

AFTER the conclusion of his talk to his followers in the fo'csle in the latter part of the second dog watch, there was silence for a while. The electric bulbs glowed dully through the clouds of tobacco-smoke that thickened the hot air and shone fitfully on the double tier of bunks that graced the three-sided room, shaped after the curve of the ship's bows.

Through the open door could be seen the broad alleyway that ran from the very bows of the ship, where the forepeak hatch was located with the washrooms on either side, to the fore well-deck. Across the alley could be seen the open door of the firemen's fo'csle on the port side of the ship with one or two men, who were too indifferent to listen to Walker, sitting up in their bunks and smoking and talking amongst themselves before they went up on deck to sleep.

It was baking hot below, and the coolness under the fo'csle-head awnings was very much preferable; but when Walker was discussing such matters as he was he preferred to talk in the privacy of the fo'csle itself. In spite of the awnings it was possible to hear on the bridge every word said for'ard when the wind was in the right direction, as it was now.

The squat-faced Irishman, Murphy, spoke at last, wiping his thick lips with the back of his hairy hand.

"I votes we take a peep at the liquor," he said.

There was a mutter of approval, especially from the Swedes. Like all their countrymen they were ready at any time for a drink.

Walker hesitated for a moment. He knew that drunken men were apt to get out of hand. But at the same time to endeavor to stop them drinking when liquor was so easily procurable would be likely to cause discontent and grumbling against himself. And he did not want that.

Besides, if the officers found out the men had whisky they would want to find out where they got it from. They would look up the cargo manifests and would know immediately. That would mean a search for'ard, and during such a search in dark holds anything might happen.

Walker's eyes narrowed, and he licked his lips. A twinge of pain shot across his battered face, and he winced. His rage against the giant mate and his new-found hatred came back to sweep his ideas of stealthy mutiny away.

"Between now and tomorrow night," he had said.

He would have his revenge by then. Yes, liquor would not do very much damage. He might even be able to get one of the big Swedes to kill the yellow-haired giant of a first mate while in a state of drunken excitement.

"All right," he said finally. "A couple of you go below and get up a case."

The group about the table broke up, and Murphy and an Italian went away to get the liquor. The stuff was stored against the for'ard bulkhead of number one hold, and the seaman who was acting as bosun's storekeeper had made the discovery, during one of his visits into the forepeak, that an iron door in the bulkhead communicated with number one hold right where the whisky had been placed, according to the stevedores who had spoken with some of the crew.

It required but a few hour's work with a pinch-bar and a maul to get the locked door open, and the whisky lay bare for the taking. It so happened, however, that the day the door succumbed to assault the *Ionia* reached Apia. The crew dared not touch the whisky while in harbor. If they should get roaring drunk while aboard, without troubling to go ashore and visit the saloons, the harbor police would become suspicious and would get them. And it would be found out that cargo had been broached. And that was a very serious offense.

So the crew licked their dry lips when in Apia and longed for the sea days. Slim Walker's endeavors to get his followers to remain on the *Ionia* with him when Matthews, the ship-owner, had offered to pay them off, had been aided by their knowledge of the whisky. They could not bear to think of leaving that potential pleasure.

In half an hour or so the two men returned with a case of Black and White. It had been shipped originally from London to a very thirsty Scotch copra-planter in the Louisades. There had been no ship going that way in Apia, and it had been decided to take the stuff on to Sydney, ship it to Brisbane and from there by schooner to its destination. But it was not likely that the thirsty planter would ever ease his throat with it.

The case was quickly broken open, and the bottles were distributed. The seamen brought their tin pannikins and filled them with the amber spirit, drinking it in great eager gulps and getting louder and more boisterous in their talk every minute.

The Irishman, Murphy, disdaining the use of pannikins, tilted a bottle to his lips and drank with a loud gurgling noise, pausing every now and then to cough and splutter and to run his hand over his wet mouth. Only Slim Walker drank sparingly, glowering from his dark eyes, barely visible above the great bandage that went round his head between his mouth and his lower lashes.

By the time eight bells went there was hardly a man in the fo'csle who was not drunk. Three times fights had started, and Walker had pried the combatants apart, admonishing peace. The air was reeking with the sweat of men's bodies, the thick, rank tobacco-smoke, the smell of whisky and oilskins and new paint and rope.

It was time to relieve the watch. The man on the fo'csle head, who could plainly hear the noise below coming up the ventilators, understood what was happening and looked nervously aft as no sign of his relief appeared. Nothing happened for about ten minutes, for it was not till then that those on the bridge found that the helmsman had not been relieved.

Peterson and Orville were in the little chart-house checking up on the day's run according to the figures indicated on the patent log streaming from the port quarter. Peterson himself had finished watch at eight bells, eight o'clock, being relieved by the third mate, Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown came to the door of the chart-house and tapped hesitatingly after a short while. Orville turned his head with a jerk.

"Well? What is it?" he said testily.

"Please, sir, there's been no relief come up for the helmsman yet."

Peterson straightened up and looked round at the clock on the after bulkhead. Orville turned and looked also.

"No relief! Ten after eight! What the ——'s the game?" the little millionaire snorted wrathfully.

He jog-trotted out of the chart-house, pushing Mr. Brown aside, and went to the for'ard dodger. Peterson joined him after a minute, and both men peered ahead to where the fo'csle was and listened intently. The sound of boisterous laughter and fragments of obscene songs came drifting downwind. There came the faint crash of glass as a bottle hit against something. The noise of quarreling drowned all other sounds for a moment and then was in turn drowned by laughter and singing again. Orville glared through the gathering dark and fumed with rage.

"Drunk! By the Lord Harry, drunk! The blasted swine! Where in the —— did they get the stuff from? Couldn't have brought it from Apia or they'd have been half-seas over before now.

"H'm! I'll bet m' shirt the skunks have been broaching cargo. Rot their dirty hides!"

Mr. Brown came up to him very diffidently and touched him on the arm. He said:

"About the relief for the wheel, sir? The man there is getting rather tired."

"All right; all right, Brown. I'll see to it. For'ard there! Hi! What the blazes are you thinking of down there? Get on deck!"

The singing and laughter continued as before. The fo'csle door, which had been closed for a few minutes, was flung open with a crash, its brass-ring handle rattling clearly against the alleyway bulkhead. A great beam of light stabbed the alleyway and lit up the foredeck as far aft as the winches by the foremast.

A drunken Swede staggered into view, a big, bony man weighing all of two hundred and twenty pounds and perhaps six feet two inches tall. He held on to the door-jamb for a moment and looked stupidly back on the hectic scene he was leaving. Murder flamed in his brain, and huge quantities of liquor set his veins afire.

"That big stiff of a mate is yelling for you to go and relieve the wheel," Slim Walker had whispered.

Then insinuatingly—

"He's liable to come and fetch you if you don't go."

The Swede had bellowed hugely and asserted his manhood and his ability to take care of himself.

"Fesh me lak ——! I lak t' see any man fesh me! By ——, I keel him he come here!"

Walker had sneered a little and tempted him on.

"You're a fine big man, strong and husky, Yonson. Why don't you go and show that big stiff where he gets off at? He thinks you're afraid of him. Remember what you did to the last mate?"

"*Ja*, an' I keel this one," Yonson had asserted with rising scorn.

And he had gone from the fo'csle to kill Peterson and whoever else happened to get in his way, while Slim Walker chuckled hugely to himself and returned to his weak whisky and water and to his task of not letting the fights get too far.

The big Swede left the support of the door-jamb and staggered down the alleyway and so on to the foredeck. The *Ionia* was not pitching very much, the sea still being calm, and he made his way without mishap to the foot of the companion that led to the bridge. It would have been disaster for him to attempt to negotiate the steep slant of the steps, so he gripped the canvas-covered rails that curved down at the foot and stared upward with bleared eyes.

"C'm down, you up thar! I keel las' mate preety near. I keel you! C'm down!"

"Scum!" snorted Orville, and like a flash he was off across the bridge and going down the companion-steps two at a time.

Peterson started after him with a bellow of warning. Mr. Brown grunted and moved to the bridge dodger to look over and see what happened.

WHEN the Swede heard Orville's shoes pounding on the companion above him and he caught a vague glimpse of the little millionaire through the darkness, he drew back a pace and, knotting his great fists, stood swaying and waiting.

"C'm on!" he roared.

Orville came on. He came feet first, jumping from the sixth step of the companion. His shoes hit the Swede's face at the same moment as the little millionaire straightened his knees. The force of the impact sent Orville twisting sidewise and crashed him into the port scuppers, but he was not injured beyond a few bruises.

The Swede never knew what had struck him. He shot backward as if flung from a catapult. His great fists fanned the air as he endeavored to recover his balance.

He toppled over, and his head struck the iron coaming of number two hatch, just for'ard of the bridge, with a loud crack, stunning him completely. He subsided with a grunt.

Orville picked himself up, swearing fitfully just as Peterson landed on the main deck, still running, and checked himself only by catching hold of one of the canvas-covered companion-rails and swinging completely round.

"All right, sir?" he gasped.

Then, catching sight of the dim, huddled form of the Swede:

"Why don't you leave that stuff to me? You'll be getting hurt one of these days," he added wrathfully.

Orville grunted and brushed his knees perfunctorily.

"I'll show 'em," he snarled. "I'll show 'em!"

"You wanna be careful with these big men," Peterson grumbled.

"Careful? Huh? Don't you think I c'n handle 'em? I feel like a blasted wreck after that fall. The swine didn't topple so easy as I expected."

"Leave them to me next time. Anyway—" Peterson crossed to the prostrate Swede and rolled him over so that he could see his face—"you've cut him up something shocking. Your method's rough but effective, eh?"

"I allow no man to talk the way he did aboard my ship. Is that clear? And I didn't want to shoot him. Drunk! Didn't know what he was doing. C'm 'long for'ard."

"What for?"

"No one's relieved the helmsman yet."

"That's so. Lead on."

With Peterson at his heels Orville went for'ard and trotted wrathfully up the alleyway between the firemen's and sailors' fo'csles until he reached the door to the latter. He looked inside on the drunken, reeling throng and grunted.

Fearlessly he entered, and gradually the noise died down and men became aware of his presence. The majority of the seamen had had discipline drilled into them for so long that under ordinary conditions the captain was a personage of great importance and one to be feared and conciliated.

For the moment, on first recognizing Orville, drunk though they were, they instinctively hushed their voices and drew back. All eyes were fastened on the little man.

He looked around sharply, noting each man's condition, until his eyes chanced to rest on Slim Walker standing at the head of the table, more sober than any one else, staring with bitter, burning eyes past him to the doorway where Peterson stood watchful, his elbows resting against the door-jamb each side of him.

"You!" Orville snarled, so savagely that every one jumped. "Can you steer?"

"Me?"

"Do you think I'm talking to the table?"

"Steer? No, sir. You see, I was——"

"Not a thing! Shut your mouth! It's time you learnt to steer. You're drawing an A. B.'s pay, and it's one of your jobs. Get on the bridge. You're about the soberest man here."

"It's my watch below, sir, and anyway——"

"Get on the bridge. Snappy now!"

"But it's not my watch."

Small though the quantity of liquor Slim Walker had consumed had been, he had yet enough inside him to make him forget to a great extent his own policy of stealth and avoidance of compromising situations, even had not the sight of Peterson, the man who had ruined his face forever, standing unharmed in the doorway roused within him a sudden red rage.

Orville snarled throatily and jerked at his little sandy mustache.

"That's all the same to me," he said. "All the same to me when I want a man. You shouldn't have let this bunch get drunk. I know you're the leader, and so you can —— well take the blame and the consequences. Get out of this!"

"You go to ——! I'm staying here!" Slim Walker screamed suddenly as passion swept away his control.

He reached for his knife and at the same time shouted madly to the fuddled men who stood around. And at the very instant he shouted and felt the knife-haft come to his hand he knew he had made a mistake. But it was too late to withdraw.

The seamen and what firemen stood around had had quite enough drink to drown any fear within them and to still the voice of respect to authority. Matters moved swiftly. Some one put out the light at the very moment Orville shot Walker neatly through the wrist, causing him to drop the knife and yelp with the sting of the hot lead. Bottles flew in the darkness; tin pannikins rattled against the bulkheads, rarely hitting their mark.

Peterson came charging from the doorway with a roar. The fo'csle table went down with a crash and a splintering of wood.

Orville's automatic spoke again. He could be heard cursing shrilly somewhere in the middle of the floor. Peterson, hitting out mightily with both hands, reached the spot and groped for the little millionaire.

The firemen left in the other fo'csle came running excitedly to join the fray. Chaos reigned. Oaths, shouts, shattering glass, blows, groans, thuds! And over all the pitch darkness.

VI

ON THE bridge Mr. Brown peered anxiously in the direction of the fo'csle as he saw his superiors leave the figure of the prostrate Swede and make their way along the foredeck. The third mate tugged at his short beard, shook his head and sighed. He knew the crew better than Orville or Peterson. Had he not been forced to live with them from San Francisco?

It was very likely the two men would be trapped and killed. If they were, there would be only himself and McKellip to look after the *Ionia*. Neither of them was really capable of that. Neither of them could navigate or understood the handling of a ship from the bridge. There was a lot of difference between setting a course and steering one. But of course they could fight, would have to fight, for Slim Walker would show them no mercy now they were officers and had definitely thrown in their lot with the after-guard.

With a vague presentiment stirring his troubled breast Mr. Brown slowly made his way along the bridge deck to the door of McKellip's room. He tapped three times. He tapped again after a while, receiving no answer to his first summons. Then he caught the creaking of bunk springs, the rustling of sheets as of a man turning in bed, and then the sigh of the Yankee awakening.

"Hello?"

"It's me, Brown, Mr. McKellip," the Britisher explained carefully. "I'd like to speak to you for a moment."

"Aw, ——, can't it wait till morning?"

"I am afraid it's rather serious. There's a —— row goin' on for'ard, and the skipper an' mate's gone down to straighten it out. You know what Walker is. I thought——"

"Why the blamed —— didn't you wake me before? A fight! Glory be, and me here sleeping peaceful! Be on deck in two flaps of an earwig's eyebrow, Browny!"

The sound of bare feet landing on the carpeted deck came to the third mate. He coughed severely and tugged at his beard.

"Very good, sir," he said and went back to the navigation bridge.

He saw the helmsman's face in the faint glow from the binnacle. It was frowning and ill-tempered. The man was in a rage that his shipmate had not relieved him. He would have something drastic to say to that shipmate when he saw him again. That much was evident. He said now to Mr. Brown with a growl—

"What sorta a stinkin' ship d'jer call this?"

Mr. Brown muttered sympathy and moved out of earshot and shook his head and sighed again. He did not blame the man for getting angry. It would make any sailor angry to have to wait fifteen to thirty minutes for his relief.

He had hardly reached the bridge dodger and commenced to peer for'ard again when McKellip was at his side, his hair ruffled up, his eyes blinking with sleep and excitement. He was just tucking his shirt in, and he spat over the dodger with energy. Then he chuckled.

"Fight, eh? Where is she?"

He had no need to ask again. There came the sound of a shot from for'ard, followed by a chorus of yells. Then another shot and the sound of splintering glass. The light that streamed across the foredeck and lit up the winches for'ard of the foremast had gone out suddenly.

Mr. Brown stiffened and gripped the teak bridge rail with both hands until his knuckles stood out white under the skin. He half-turned his face to the stars. He said very solemnly:

"I knew it! I knew it!"

McKellip turned and raced suddenly for the chart-house. He dashed inside and grabbed up the electric torch that was always laid in a rack above the table on which a chart of the islands of Samoa was spread. Also the hastening man snatched up a heavy steel claw-hammer that Orville had been using earlier in the day to tack up some mariner's notices with on the wooden bulkheads.

"Keep on the bridge, Browny. Better ring up and tell the chief engineer what's breakin'!" yelled McKellip as he took the port companion to the fore well-deck at a run.

He disappeared from view, and Mr. Brown heard him racing for'ard and caught the reflected flicker of the torch he switched on now and then against the after part of the foremast.

The third mate stood rigid for a moment and fingered his beard. His heart-beats had not quickened one iota. Excitement was a mere name to him. Like a rock he went through the world while the tides of fortune and fate and issues swirled about him, crashing to ruin on his indifference. Yet somewhere inside there worked a mind.

"Remarkable man that, McKellip," he thought. "Always knows what to do."

Then he moved to the engine-room speaking-tube with the idea of doing as the second mate had suggested and informing the chief engineer. But at the precise moment Mr. Brown's hand was outstretched to take hold of the whistle plug the chief blew up the tube from below and spoke sourly.

"Ha ye no' any ideea wha's becoom ah ma mon? Here's th' watch not yet relieved an' lon's past th' watch time. Is ought th' ma'er?"

"Yes, sir. I am afraid the men are all drunk. They probably have been getting at the whisky in the forehold. I have had the impression for some time past——"

"Na, na, mon. Ye dinna need tell a yarn aboot it. Who's ye?"

"Mr. Brown, sir, the third officer. Temporary, only temporary, sir."

"Sa Ah judge. 'Tis as well pe'haps. Where's th' skipper?"

"He went for'ard with the mate not fifteen minutes ago, sir. I have an idea they went below to get the watch on deck. There has been shooting, but——"

"Losh, mon! Ano'er scrap? Weel, Ah'll take a turrn for'ard wi' ma spanner and see if Ah c'n get ma oon watch below. Goo'-by."

"Good-by, sir; good-by."

Mr. Brown carefully plugged the speaking-tube, and with his hands behind his back he crossed to the bridge wing and looked away over the dark, whispering sea. The stars were shooting long shafts of light across the scarce-ruffled swells, and away on the beam a school of porpoise was weaving fantastic golden trails of phosphorescent light.

But Mr. Brown saw not the beauty of it all. Nor did he peer for'ard with any anxiety to strive to see how McKellip had progressed. He was seeing limned on the far horizon a somewhat ugly two-story red-brick house on the outskirts of London. He could see the green curtains on the ground windows and the white curtains up-stairs. In front was a little garden surrounded by iron railings. The door-step was cleaned with sandstone and glisteningly white; the door-knocker and knob of brass gleamed golden with a recent polish.

The door opened. A woman came forth and held out her arms. She was short and somewhat plump, with a red, good-natured face and full bosom. A woman perhaps of thirty-five or forty, a few streaks of gray in her brown hair.

The third mate shook his head mournfully and sighed.

"I'm afraid not, Maggie," he whispered. "I'm afraid not."

Then he turned abruptly inboard and walked across the bridge, a frown on his face and a presentiment of evil gnawing within him.

MEANWHILE things were happening in the dark fo'csle. Some one had thoughtfully switched out the light in the firemen's fo'csle across the alleyway, thus making things darker than ever.

Orville was still cursing shrilly from somewhere under a heap of men and was gradually wriggling clear and making for the door. It was a first-class mix-up with the odds in favor of the minority. Only Orville and Peterson knew exactly to whom they were opposed. The crew got in each other's way. The yellow-haired giant was trying to find his captain, while Orville was making for the spot he had last seen Peterson, between the door-jambs.

Drunken men staggered and fell all over the place, grappling with each other and cursing with great fervor. His right wrist hanging limp at his side, the infuriated Walker was struggling with a short man he believed was Orville and trying to knife him with a weapon he held in his left hand. He got the steel home at last and felt the man he held give back with a gasp and a short oath and then sink panting to the floor.

"That'll fix you, you little rat!" panted Walker, relaxing a bit and wiping his forehead.

"Ye fule! It's me—Murphy!"

The panting voice of the Irishman came from the darkness above the noise of the surrounding combat. Walker snarled with baffled rage and new anger. He had been wasting time on the wrong man.

"Take it again," he grated and lunged viciously downward, running his knife up to the hilt. "What did you want to get in my way for?"

There was no answer, or rather what there was was drowned under a terrific bellow as some half-drunken man rolled on a broken bottle and removed himself with appalling speed. Cursing, Slim Walker groped a stumbling way over writhing bodies to the door. He knew Orville would make for there. He knew also that Peterson was somewhere there, for he had last seen the yellow-haired giant in the doorway when the lights went out.

Orville reached the door at the same time as Walker. The little millionaire was on his hands and knees and snorting vigorously. He had been having the time of his life, holding his automatic clenched tight in his right fist and striking with it at everything that came in his way.

As soon as his groping hand came into contact with Walker's foot he lifted himself and smashed with all his strength against the other's broken and bandaged nose. His aim was lucky. Walker nearly fainted with the astonishing pain of it, and he lashed out viciously with his knife. The steel just ripped the little millionaire's jacket sleeve.

Orville grunted and brought his knee up with a jar, catching Walker in the pit of the stomach. Then, hastily slipping his automatic into his pocket, he pitched his now breathless opponent back into the darkness of the crawling fo'csle with a quick ju-jutsu grip.

Peterson had been dragged down by sheer weight of numbers. He was so much bigger than Orville, the biggest man in the fo'csle, that the mutineers could not mistake whom they had hold of in his case.

Every time he hit a man that man went out of the fight and stayed out, sometimes crawling, sometimes flying, mostly unconscious. But at the last, with two two-hundred-pound bony Swedes on his back, an Italian and a Portugee fireman wrapped round his legs and half a dozen men slugging at his stomach, he went down to the deck, where all hands piled on top of him and got in one another's way.

Men then began groping for their knives. They had to be careful in the dark where they were stabbing, and Peterson was causing such an earthquake under them that they dared not thrust until they were sure. As it was one or two received wounds from their own shipmates.

But it was certain that sooner or later a thrust would be sent home into the giant body that would still it forever. It was only a matter of time. Peterson was already tiring.

Orville turned and started to run along the alleyway as soon as he had got rid of Walker. It was the little millionaire's intention to yell to Mr. Brown on the bridge to get a lamp of some sort and come and help him get Peterson out of the jam, knowing that as Peterson was not at the door where he had left him he must be somewhere in the thick of the combat.

But at the end of the alleyway, where the foredeck commenced, Orville ran full pelt into another racing figure. Simultaneously both swung vicious right-handers. It was no time to stop and ask questions.

Both connected. There were two distinct thuds as both men hit the deck, Orville going farthest as he was the lighter man.

Both rebounded like rubber balls and came for more. They glared through the darkness as they rushed, and then Orville, seeing the other's profile against the starry sky, stopped short and snorted.

"Is that McKellip?"

"Jumping rattlesnakes! Is that you, sir?"

McKellip tried to stop and slid almost to Orville's feet before he succeeded.

"Of course it's me," Orville snarled. "Who the —— did you think it was? What do you mean by attacking me?"

"You attacked *me*, sir."

"That's a lie. You rushed me!"

"I didn't; I——"

"Shut up! Here, run and fetch a lamp, quick. The mate's in the fo'csle somewhere."

"I got the torch from the chart-house."

"Gimme it! Got a gun?"

"Got a hammer."

"Le's go."

Orville led the way back at a run. The fo'csle was still in a turmoil. Walker's voice was raised gaspingly.

"Wait a bit! Say, wait a bit! Get a light, some one! I believe they got away. Get a light! Wait and see!"

"Here's light," Orville bellowed, snapping on the torch as he stepped inside the doorway and swept the light around.

The lean figure of McKellip with the hammer loomed behind him. Struggling suddenly ceased. The light blinded the fighting men and recalled them to their senses more or less. Orville, catching sight of the light-switch on the bulkhead near the door, nodded to it jerkily.

"Put it on!" he snapped, and kicked a man in the ribs who was lying on the floor near him.

The man had been hit in the stomach by something or some one and was violently sick. But he rocked to his feet at Orville's command and tottered for the switch. He pulled it down with a sigh and then sank wearily to the deck again. Every eye was on Orville.

THE fo'csle was in a state of wreck. It looked as if a couple of barroom rough-houses had been pulled there and then a cyclone had come along and finished the job. Half the bunks were matchwood. Men were stretched everywhere on the deck, which was wet and reeking with blood and spilled whisky. The table was not, though a few splinters of its white-scrubbed woodwork could be seen here and there.

Men dotted the deck in knots of two and three, where they had been wrestling with each other over the bodies of the unconscious. Murphy, the Irishman, lay dead alongside the round iron hawse-pipe through which the anchor cable ran. His lower jaw was dropping foolishly sidewise, exposing his little, tobacco-stained teeth; and his shirt was torn open down the front, exposing a tattooed tops'l-schooner under full sail. He was lying in a pool of gathering blood, and his hands were tensed in the form of claws and scratched into the deck.

Slim Walker huddled like a gaunt, bloody scarecrow on top of one of the remaining sound bunks, his knees drawn up to his chin, his face, what of it could be seen, white and twisted with pain, his great bandage red with fresh blood, his eyes staring and sick and his little, dark mustaches ruffled up like two little balls of fluff each side of his nose. His right arm hung useless and was drenched with blood from the bullet-hole Orville had put through the wrist.

In the very bows of the ship, where the curving hull and the fo'csle bulkhead met in a point just for'ard of the hawse-pipe, was a heap of about eight men. Nearer were a few unconscious men piled one over the other. The conscious heap, every man of which was in some unnatural position, was watching Orville closely, and the pugnaciousness, at first so apparent, was rapidly oozing away.

"Where the ——'s Peterson?" Orville said, astonished, more to McKellip than to the crew.

There was no sign of the giant mate. But next moment he appeared.

A swarthy Italian, his shirt well-nigh off his back, who was sitting awkwardly on the top of the conscious heap for'ard, suddenly rose straight in the air with a yell. He scrambled hastily out of the way and hobbled to the nearest bunk, nursing a rather fleshy part of his thigh.

Peterson, grinning somewhat, poked his rather flushed face from the middle of the heap and then stood upright, brushing off his opponents as if they had been flies. There was not the slightest mark on him. He looked as calm and as comfortable, but for his flush, as when Orville had left him at the doorway.

"All here," he grunted. "Hello, McKellip. Any luck?"

"Not a bit," mourned the Yankee, wagging his claw-hammer. "I always come in just too late. Hurt?"

"Not on your life. How are you, sir?"

Orville snorted and glared around on the sobered and uneasy crew.

"How'd you think I'd be? Cool and comfortable? No, sir. I'm —— well out of breath and clawed to ribbons. You scum! I'll have you jumping like fleas on hot bricks by the time I'm finished. You, Walker, with the blood and whiskers, get on the bridge and take the wheel."

Walker licked his dry lips and glared his hate.

"My wrist's broke. You shot it," he said suddenly.

"—— bad shot I made. It should have been your lungs. Well, I'll send some stuff down for it later. You! That big slob with a squint eye and a bleeding nose. Go up and steer. Is it your watch on deck?"

"Yessir," the man muttered, shuffling uneasily about on his feet and fondling his battered face.

"Then get on deck. On deck at once! Don't stand there sniffing!"

Without a word the man went out into the alleyway and made for the bridge, where Mr. Brown received him with a grunt and a relieved air. It was evident that the captain had things in hand.

"If I find any more drinking going on tonight or any night I'm coming down again," Orville threatened. "Is that clear? Clean up this fo'csle. Where'd you get that whisky? You, Walker!"

The man hesitated for a moment and looked round on his shipmates. They avoided his eye for the most part. It was no time to argue with the little captain. He had the upper hand now.

They remembered the automatic he must still have somewhere about him. And Murphy lay dead on the deck, and no one to say who killed him. And a dozen other men were slashed and battered. For the moment all were cowed and exhausted.

"Number one hold, sir," mumbled Walker at last sullenly.

"Through the forepeak, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who's the storekeeper here?"

The seaman who acted as such came slowly forward from the after end of the fo'csle, trying to stanch a flow of blood from a great gash in his arm. It had been he who had rolled on the broken bottle early in the fray. He looked at Orville somewhat apprehensively.

"H'm, so you're the skunk. Come to my room tomorrow at ten o'clock. I'll log you two weeks' pay. Is the forepeak locked? Good! Give me the key."

The little millionaire paused and glared round again.

"One man dead and the rest of you smashed up. I've —— good mind to put you all in irons. Would, only I want you all to work ship with.

"But don't think this ends here. I'm having you arrested in Sydney to answer for mutiny. Is that clear? Also you'll all pay a share from your money for the whisky that's missing from the cargo. Understand?

"And get this: Next time there's any of this stuff pulled I aim for a man's heart instead of his wrist. That's all for the moment. Get this place cleared up."

"Jes' a momen', sorr."

Every one turned. Mackenzie squeezed through the doorway between Peterson and McKellip, who grinned as they saw him. The chief was smiling very pleasantly. Also he carried in his sound right hand his terrible twelve-inch shifting-spanner.

With a grunt he surveyed the havoc of the fo'csle and the crestfallen men around. He eyed the dead body of Murphy for a moment and grunted again. Then his smile disappeared and he grew as grim as death.

He glared, and his voice rose raspingly. The firemen present began to shiver a little and look at each other uneasily.

"Will ye un'erstan' Ah've been waitin' belo' f' ye, chilren? 'Tis a sad day when a chief engineer has t' coom an' fetch his oon watch. Gie doon belo', ye lashin's o' ——! Gie doon belo'! Must Ah hit ye wi' ma spanner ag'in? Must Ah! Ye ma well roon! Roón, ye scoom! Gie doon belo'!"

He finished with a roar, and Peterson and McKellip removed themselves hastily from the doorway as the firemen who should have gone below at eight bells made a mad rush for the alleyway, past the grim, lean man with the flaming mustache and his left arm in a sling who made swings at them with his terrible twelve-inch shifting-spanner.

"Ah'll teach ye t' l'ave yer charges!" he boomed as he stalked out of the fo'csle after the last man without so much as a glance at Orville and his mates.

When he had disappeared and they could only hear his harsh voice along the foredeck Orville turned with a grunt once again to the men that were left.

"Has the lookout been relieved?"

There was no answer in words, but with a guilty look a seaman made a hasty break for the door and scuttled out on deck to relieve the man on the fo'csle head.

"Just see the reliefs are on time for the rest of the voyage," the little millionaire snarled, and then with a snort he turned and left the fo'csle; and, breathing hard on his wisp of mustache, he led the way back to the bridge. His sandy, bleached hair was bare to the stars as he had lost his white-topped seaman's cap somewhere in the past mêlée. He muttered fiercely:

"I'll show 'em! I'll show the blighters!"

AT THE foot of the companion leading to the bridge a sudden thought seemed to strike him. He halted abruptly with his hands on the canvas-covered rails and one foot on the first step, twisting his head round.

"Why did that dago yell when I asked for you, Peterson?"

Peterson grinned and scratched the back of his head. His huge shoulders shook.

"He was sitting on my face, sir," he explained.

"Well?"

"I bit him!"

Orville snorted and glared.

"You did, hey? Don't stand there grinning like a blasted cat. Get up on the bridge and see if Brown— Oh, it's his watch, isn't it? Well, le's go and drink. My ——, but I'm thirsty! This climate never did agree with me."

He turned and swung up the companion. McKellip waggled his claw-hammer and followed him chuckling, while Peterson brought up the rear.

Mr. Brown hurried forward anxiously and, removing his cap, rubbed his half-bald head with one hand.

"Is everything all right, sir?" he said. "I told the chief engineer you had gone——"

"Yep, we saw him. Everything's fine, Brown. Helmsman relieved?"

"Yessir. He looks rather—rather——"

"Sick? So'd you if you had eyes that squinted like his. Well, well, it's quite exciting tonight, Mr. Brown. Er—wait for about half an hour, give the crew time to clean up, and then whistle for the watch to stand by. There's two dead men to be sewn up.

"Here's the key of the forepeak. Give it to the carpenter to look after and tell him he's not to let any of the seamen down there. Is that clear? Get some canvas on deck—any old sails will do—about twelve fathoms, and call the chief 'n' ask him t' send up a couple of men with some fire-bars. Call me if you're in doubt at all. One body is aft by the engine-room skylight, and the other's in the fo'csle."

Mr. Brown muttered, "Aye, aye, sir," as he took the forepeak key. "Two men dead."

He moved away, shaking his head and muttering to himself. Orville grunted and passed along to his own room, inviting both Peterson and McKellip to come in.

"I think I've just about got that gang for'ard buffaloed now," he crowed as he rummaged in a locker for the whisky-bottle and some glasses, the steward having gone off duty for the night.

But Peterson shook his head, and even McKellip grunted disapproval.

"Don't be too sure, sir," the yellow-headed giant said. "It's a pity you didn't finish that Walker fellow while you were at it. He's a bad *hombre*. I can see quite a bit of trouble looming before the *Ionia* docks at Sydney."

"Aye, he knows about the silver too," added McKellip with some gloom, waving with his claw-hammer toward the two big black-painted chests that stood one on top of the other in a corner of the cabin. "I tell you, sir, that there is a settled plot afoot t' get this packet. You know what happened on the run out from 'Frisco? That Walker sure is a bad guy. I'd put him in irons if I were you."

Orville snorted as he filled three glasses and jammed the cork back in the slim bottle with a vicious smack of his open palm.

"Pooh! I've got him scared to death. You, Peterson, smashed his face and I shot his wrist. That's enough for any man. If he's wise he'll know he can't do a thing. I've got his number. As soon as I get to Sydney I'll turn him over to the police."

"That's just the reason why he's going to make another effort to get the ship, if that's what he's planning, as McKellip says. I'd put him in irons," Peterson objected as he picked up his half-filled glass and nodded to Orville. "Well, here's luck!"

The three men drank and smacked their lips, and then each went about his business. McKellip retired to his room with his claw-hammer and tried to get some more sleep before it was his watch. Peterson made a gloomy way to his quarters with the same intention. Orville was left alone and for a while stood deep in thought over what his two mates advised.

VII

IN SPITE of the little millionaire's aggressiveness and apparent contempt for anything his enemies might do, there ran within the man a deep strain of caution and foresight. Had he been all surface he would not have lived to see the old savage island days pass to oblivion, nor would he have garnered the vast wealth that was his.

Bluff was half the battle, that he knew. Men called it by various names—self-confidence, aggressiveness, sometimes egotism and vanity; but at the bottom it was all the same.

None knew better than he, however, that a man to be successful and to live a long time must have something with which to back his bluff up in case it should be called. And he had that something. The proof lay all over the Pacific in the plantations carved from the tropical wilderness, the trading-stations balancing on still half-known shores, in the many ships sailing the still uncharted seas of the islands and all flying the house flag, blue stars on a white ground, of Seth Orville.

Wherefore the first thing Orville did when his mates disappeared was to think the situation briefly over. It would do no good to put Slim Walker in irons; that could hardly be done anyway with the man wounded as he was, with all the crew behind him, and he would not be prevented from leading the mutiny.

To attempt to shut him up anywhere seemed a useless proceeding.

To leave him at liberty seemed folly, but there was nothing else.

And perhaps Orville did not want to find anything else. The old adventure spirit within him was craving action, such action as he had had during the past few hours since leaving Apia. He had undertaken to sail the seas again and meet the every-day problems of a master-mariner, and he wanted to enjoy himself to the limit.

He knew the life could not continue for him. He *was*, after all, getting old. The fight in the fo'csle had drained him of strength for a time more than he cared to admit.

With a grunt he rose at last from the chair he had flung himself into and proceeded to light a cigar. Then he took his automatic from his hip pocket and cleaned and reloaded it. Then he washed and changed his rumpled, stained whites for a suit of thin blue serge, put on a dark-blue seaman's cap, slipped his automatic back in his hip pocket and went out on deck, closing his door softly behind him.

It was just about then that Mr. Brown blew heavily on his whistle. It was time to give orders about the dead men and to hand over to the carpenter the key of the forepeak. The carpenter and two men would be busy for an hour or more, finding canvas, sail-twine, needles and fire-bars. Theirs was a grisly task.

And the body of the dead fireman was in need of burial. Decomposition occurs quickly in the tropics.

With Mr. Brown's measured tones in his ears, Orville went quietly down the starboard companion to the after well-deck. He walked slowly and kept in the deeper shadow of the bulwarks, thankful that the moon had not yet risen and that the starlight was not very bright. He went along the alley under the poop and rounded the curve of the deck to where the white stern light, half-hidden from where he stood by the wide molding that edged the poop deck, glowed over the tumbling, murmuring wake and beat back the darkness for a space of perhaps twenty feet.

Orville peered into the clicking dial of the patent log, noted the number the hand recorded with a grunt of satisfaction; and then, looking for a long minute at the white log-line streaming astern into the blackness beyond the stern light and skipping up and down jerkily with every slight heave and roll of the *Ionia*, he grunted once again.

The steering-gear's clanking as it turned inside the wheel-house prevented very much from being heard, but during the intervals when the helmsman held the wheel motionless and the gear stopped clanking Orville caught the mutter of voices. He gave an exclamation of satisfaction and padded silently along the port alley of the poop until he stood beneath one of the brass-rimmed port-holes whence came a shaft of light.

Two men were talking within the wheel-house in unguarded voices, naturally not expecting an eavesdropper so far aft and at such a time of night. One man Orville recognized from the voice as the cook he had made row the drunken second mate ashore that morning, and the other, he guessed from the fact that an oil-can clinked every now and then against steel, was the greaser sent aft by the chief to watch the steering-gear and keep it oiled and in repair.

"—and he took the forepeak key," the cook was saying heatedly. "That balls us up for a drink. Still I gotta coupla bottles in my room. Give you a drink when you're passin' that way, Joe."

"Righto," the man addressed as Joe replied. "Glad in a way I wasn't at the fight. What's Slim goin' t' do now? ——, that was a smash on the dial he got, wasn't it?"

"Yes, he's pretty badly broken up all right. That little —— of a skipper shot him in the wrist pretty bad too."

"Is that a fact? Gee, guess Slim's mad. What's he gonna do, do you know?"

"I only saw him for a few minutes. Harry slipped along 'midships and told me about the row. Said there was bloody murder going on for'ard. I slipped along to see what I could, which wasn't much. I got there when it was all over. The skipper and that big hunky mate of his had gone.

"Funny how they had the pair of 'em down and helpless and then never finished 'em. Always the way. A man c'n never find his knife when he needs the —— thing. McKellip was there too. I think the next move'll be to put *him* outa the way. It's all going to be stuff like we pulled from 'Frisco down."

"What the —— did Slim wanna pull a knife on the old man for?"

"Aw, jes' got mad. An' they'd all been drinking pretty heavy, so I hear. You knows what drunken men are."

"Aye, but that was what I calls a mistake."

"It were. You're —— right it was a mistake. Slim says to me, he says, just about half hour ago, he says—

" 'We might have t' use you, cookie, to p'isen th' grub if things get too bad.' "

"I don't go on that stuff. Seems to me it c'n all be done with a knife if it's worked right. We never had any trouble with the third mate and the rest outa 'Frisco."

"That's jes' what I says."

Then with a change of tone:

"How you gettin' on below with the chief? Swine, ain't he?"

"Yeah. He's the bunk sure enough. The —— swine don' give a man a chance. He stan's there and looks and looks and watches and watches, 'olding that blamed long spanner of 'is. And he ain't scared to use it neither, take it from me.

"Don't know when the —— he sleeps. He's allus in the stokehole when I goes on, and the other watches says the same. He's got three men what are regular 'old-country' greasers, and they acts as engineers. Never give none of us crimp's crew a chance at the job.

"But what did Slim say he'd do? Which man is going after McKellip? Wish Slim'd hurry up and get busy. I'm about sick o' this —— job."

"Guess it'll depend on what happens. I don't know anyway. But Slim did say we'd have ta settle the thing soon or the skipper'll shut us all up in irons. That'd mean hanging, I guess. He says if we hadn't got scared before we reached Apia we'd have had the ship b' now. P'raps he was right."

"P'raps he was."

"Well, I'm going t' turn in. I jes' came aft t' get a bucket of spuds for the morning. Goo' night."

"G'night."

Orville pressed back against the steel bulkhead as the wheel-house door swung open and the cook stepped forth carrying a bucket in one hand. The light from within shone across the deck for a moment on to the whispering sea overside and then was gone. The door slammed, the brass-ring handle rattling violently.

The cook could not see in the sudden dark, and he groped past Orville within six inches, so close that the swinging, empty bucket grazed the little millionaire's knee and he could smell the reek of garlic on the man's breath. Orville watched him go up the companion to the poop deck and heard him fumbling with the canvas "save-all" flung over the deck-load of fresh vegetables. Then Orville slipped from out the alley and padded silently for'ard.

Opening the door under the companion leading up to the engineers' quarters, Orville slipped along the dark alleyway that led to the fore well-deck. He paused for a moment by the open door of the fiddley, whence came hot gusts of air, thick with drifting coal-dust and the smell of oil.

Right across the fiddley from where he stood he could hear the rattle and jar of the ash-hoist and the ceaseless profanity of the man who was lifting the rope-edged short sacks of ashes over the side.

Peering down through the hot iron gratings into the stokehole, Orville could see the nearly naked firemen sweating at their shovels and slices. He heard the clang of the fire-doors, the crunching rattle of the trimmers' iron barrows running coal from the bunkers to the foot plates of the stokehole.

He thought he could see the chief, lean and grim, with his black sling and his eternal spanner, standing near the door leading to the engine-room as a lurid flame from one of the fire-doors fought back the shadows for a moment. But he could not be sure.

He continued his way for'ard, meeting no one, until he reached the break of the fo'csle and stood in the deeper gloom under the iron ladder that led to the fo'csle head.

The alleyway between the two fo'csles was in darkness, as both fo'csle doors were closed; but Orville dared not risk listening at one of them, for there was no saying when a man might want to come on deck or one on deck go below. Besides, the carpenter and the two seamen sewing up the dead bodies were somewhere dodging about.

He hoisted himself up the companion and into the shadow of the windlass and the canvas-covered wire reels that dotted about. The awnings above made the whole place even darker than the alleyway below.

It was a hot night, but no one was sleeping above. Probably no one felt any inclination to go above after the exhausting battle in the fo'csle.

And Orville found another reason as well. He found out by moving for'ard a bit to one of the big ventilators that let foul air out of the sailors fo'csle. He could see the shadowy, vague form of the lookout by the steel derrick in the very bows that was used for launching and lifting spare anchors, and was relieved to find the man had not seen him—probably could not see him in the darkness—and was interested in watching the Southern Cross blaze low in the sky, and thinking perhaps of what had passed during the last hour or two.

It was no comfortable position Orville had, listening at the cowl head, for the air that rushed up was fetid and overpowering; but he stuck to his post for very obvious reasons. Peering down the cowl he could see the faint gleam of light from the fo'csle, his only view consisting of a round portion of deck, very much whisky-stained and flecked with dried blood and cut into four pieces by the iron cross-stretchers that went at the foot of the ventilator.

As he looked a figure walked into view and stood directly underneath the cross irons. Orville could see only the head and shoulders, and the tips of the shoes, which appeared from his position to stick out from the face. He caught the glimpse of a great bandage round the head and of a bandaged arm, and he knew the figure was that of Slim Walker. Eagerly he listened.

"—mistake we made was the liquor. I told you it would be best to leave it alone. That —— Irishman was to blame. But he's dead, and a good riddance too. We all know better now.

"This skipper isn't like the last. We've got to take things more carefully. We'll get him soon, and that swine of a mate as well. McKellip and Brown will be easier.

"I told the firemen they'd have to look after their end of it, and I think they will. We'll give them the signal when the time comes. If they can't get rid of that Scotchman we'll have to give them a hand after we've got the deck crowd. You, Yonson, shouldn't let the skipper get away with that sort of stuff. Look what he did to your face."

"I ban keel him and the mate some tam," came Yonson's rumbling voice from somewhere for'ard.

Walker waved his arm and moved his head.

"An' look at me. I've got to get some one for this. Besides, think of what'll happen if we let the skipper tell his tale to the Sydney police. It's jail for life for most of us. We can't let him get away with it. Just stand with me, boys, and in forty-eight hours from now we'll have the ship. My plan is this. You, Yonson——"

"WHAT the —— are you doing here?"

A hand fell on Orville's shoulder, and he whipped round like a startled hare, his hand flashing to his hip. It was the man on the lookout. He had lighted a cigaret and started to stroll up and down the fo'csle head as most seamen do when on watch. He had approached the ventilator with the idea of listening himself to what his leader's plans were when he had seen the shadowy form of Orville blocking out the dim glow from the cowl.

He thought for a moment it was one of the ship's two cooks, or perhaps the steward listening, but on peering under Orville's cap he saw his mistake and started violently. The lighted cigaret dropped from his hand and rolled across the deck. He let go of the little millionaire's arm abruptly and shouted aside so that those below could hear:

"Fine night, captain! When do you think we'll get into Sydney?"

"Shut your mouth!" Orville grated, and his automatic ground into the man's ribs.

But the damage was done. Walker ceased speaking and glanced suddenly upward. Then he motioned to Yonson, the big Swede, to go above and see what was wrong on the fo'csle head. But by the time Yonson arrived there he found the lookout alone, groping profanely for his dropped cigaret.

Orville returned to his room snorting with vexation and jerking savagely at his wisp of mustache. He poured a drink viciously and drank it and then sat down to think.

He had definitely decided now not to shut Walker up. It would do little good, and he didn't want the crew to think he was the least bit afraid of them. The whole affair was perplexing, but it was thrilling. Orville chuckled after a while and rubbed his bony hands together. He'd show 'em.

THE night passed without further excitement. Orville had not even troubled to keep watch. He knew men well enough to know that Walker would not make any move till morning. The mutineer leader would think that Orville would keep watch anyway, especially after his having been caught at the fo'csle ventilator. Also the crew, both seamen and firemen, needed a few hours to recuperate in and get over their set-back. Wherefore the night watches passed along smoothly.

McKellip relieved Mr. Brown at midnight, talked with him for a few minutes and then took over charge of the *Ionia* while the third mate went to get some sleep. Peterson relieved McKellip at four o'clock and according to sea custom turned the watch to and started them washing down. For this task the man was withdrawn from the lookout and the carpenter handled the hose, the *Ionia* not only being two A. B.'s short, counting the withdrawal of McKellip and Brown, but also lacking a bosun, lamp-trimmer and a couple of ordinary seamen.

Orville came on the bridge about half-past seven with a half-filled glass in one hand and a cigar in the other. He was in his cotton pajamas of a light shade of blue and looked none the worse for his strenuous adventures of the preceding day. He joined the sleepy Peterson in a slow walk across the bridge, sipping occasionally at his glass and puffing between sips at his cigar.

The air was still cool and pleasant, and a light wind had sprung up from the south. The sea was smooth and lifted and fell in vast flat rolls, like a woman's breast heaving at every breath. The wind barely ruffled the surface. Flying-fish were breaking water now and then, whisking together like silver cigars across the gentle swells and disappearing simultaneously with a loud plop.

The sun was just peering above the sea-rim, golden and hot, while the sky above it was a wonderful pink streaked with crimson and old gold. There was not a cloud in sight, and it was evident that the day was to be hot and brilliant, achingly brilliant, as most days were in that latitude.

"Nothing happened last night, eh?" Orville asked after a while, gazing somewhat dreamily into the eye of the rising sun.

Peterson shook his head.

"Nothing, sir. McKellip told me when I relieved him that nothing occurred during his watch. Everything's been quiet."

"Good! Well—" Orville transferred his gaze to Peterson with a jerk— "I'm going to get into some clothes. Have the crew, all hands—seamen that is—muster by number two hatch in fifteen minutes. Is that clear?"

"By number two hatch? Yes, sir. What's the idea?"

"That's my business. Do as you're told, —— it; do as you're told."

"Aye, aye, sir," Peterson grinned.

Orville went below and changed into some clean whites, slipped his automatic into his hip pocket and then went down to the main deck, where Peterson by this time had the seamen mustered in a sullen group by number two hatch. The men were glancing uneasily at one another when Orville appeared, and their uneasiness increased as they saw him approach. They wondered what he was going to do.

"All ready, carpenter?"

The carpenter jerked his head toward a large flat bundle covered with canvas that stood on top of the hatch behind the grouped crew.

"Yessir," he said.

"All right. You men get hold of the gratings and bring 'em to the rail. We'll have the service here all due and proper. Jump now!"

There was a perceptible sigh of relief. After all it was only the funeral of the two dead men they had been called on deck at attend. They clambered somewhat thankfully on the hatch top and, flinging back the canvas, exposed the two stiff canvas-swathed forms, weighted with fire-bars, reposing each one on a long light grating from the bunker hatch midships. The men lifted the gratings and brought them to the rail, balancing them half over.

"Take off your caps. Take 'em off!" Orville snarled.

Hastily the seamen obeyed. Slim Walker removed his headgear with his left hand. He had no heavy work to do—could not do any with his injuries; and he was standing by the rail watching his companions handle the gratings.

Peterson removed his cap, and Mr. Brown, who had come on the bridge preparatory to relieving Peterson at eight bells and was leaning over the dodger, took off his cap also. Orville kept his on for some reason or other; probably forgot it. He glanced up to the bridge and caught Mr. Brown's eye.

"Ring down to slow speed!" he called, and with a nod Mr. Brown disappeared.

The jangle of the engine-room telegraphs was heard, repeated once, twice, and slowly the way fell off the *Ionia*.

With a grunt Orville commenced to read the service aloud from a small, black, leather-bound volume he carried. He skipped sentences, mumbled whole paragraphs, and it was evident he performed the service only because of custom and habit. Certainly neither of the dead deserved a decent burial. They had lived and died viciously. The service came to an end with some abruptness.

"Dump 'em in the ditch!" Orville grunted. "Dump 'em, I say. Make it fast!"

The men holding the gratings tilted them until the bodies slid off and disappeared into the sea with heavy splashes. Then the gratings were replaced on the top of number two hatch and the men put on their caps and started to go for'ard.

"Hi! Who the —— told you all to go?" Orville demanded wrathfully. "Line up here. Line up along the coaming. C'm 'long! Peterson, get 'em in a straight line. Good! Now turn 'em round. Carpenter, get me a hammer. Lively! Turn 'em round, Peterson; turn 'em round. I want to see their backs."

With a slightly puzzled frown on his face Peterson got the men into the position required by Orville, and Mr. Brown, still gazing from the bridge, scratched his head and wondered if the little millionaire had suddenly gone crazy.

The carpenter came running with a hammer in a few moments, and Orville took it from him with a grunt.

"Here, hold this," he said, giving the carpenter the service book.

Starting at the first man in the line of seamen, Orville stepped up behind him and whipped his sheath knife from his belt. He placed the point on the deck, holding the blade at an angle of about forty-five degrees, and with a sharp blow of the hammer broke off the needle-like point about an inch from the end. Then he dropped the knife back in its sheath again and passed on to the next man. The action he repeated with every seaman present, though in the case of Slim Walker he pitched his knife overboard altogether.

"You won't need one with that gammy hand of yours," he grunted.

Then when he had finished he stepped back and glared.

"Turn round!"

Sullenly the crew turned and faced him.

"Now understand. Knives on ships are for cutting and not for sticking. Is that clear? Good. If I find any man putting a point on his knife or carrying a knife with a point, he's facing the biggest lacing he ever had in his life. Savvy?"

There was one or two mumbled "Yessirs." Peterson chuckled. Mr. Brown stopped scratching his head and permitted himself the luxury of a slow smile and a deep nod of his head. Slim Walker's dark eyes glowed their hate, but the man said nothing.

"That'll do," Orville snapped, and the seamen filed away while their captain, returning the hammer to the carpenter and receiving back the service book, jog-trotted toward the bridge and his room, licking his dry lips.

"Full speed, Mr. Brown," he called as he reached the head of the companion.

"Full speed, sir," said Mr. Brown moving sidewise to the telegraph.

The man at the wheel twisted his head and peered through the glass windows of the chart-house at the clock on the wall. He heard the instrument begin to strike, and with a quick movement he removed his right hand from the white-worn wheel-spokes and reached for the man-rope knot at the end of the bell lanyard above his head. He struck eight bells and with a sigh turned and peered at the compass and waited for his relief.

Orville turned to Peterson with something of a smile.

"Just twenty-four hours I've had this packet in hand, and look at her; just look!" he crowed. "Crew like baby lambs and everything going strong. *I* haven't lost an officer yet."

"Twenty-four hours isn't very long, sir. I'd like to point out that we still have a week or two to go before reaching Sydney."

Orville snarled.

"Shut up! You're like a blasted frog—always croaking. You make me sick. C'm 'long and drink."

"Aye, aye, sir," grinned Peterson as he followed his captain into the cabin and at the same time bellowed for the steward.

"Be a good idea to get the old packet into shape," Orville grunted over the glasses. "Gillman let her slide something shameful. Suppose he was too busy watching out for himself to think of the ship. Get the carpenter t' mix you some boot-topping, and have the watch get to painting down the sticks. We'll dispense with a lookout in daytime. Have the foremast painted first, and set a man to oil down the mainmast stays. I see too, that a lot of the rigging could do with rattling down. See to it.

I'll take a look around today and see what else's in bad shape."

PETERSON grunted and went away to his duties. Though it was technically his watch below he was not off duty.

It is the business of a ship's first officer, or mate, to keep his ship in trim. He is the ship's husband. He has to see that everything on deck is in good condition and is kept so. He is expected to be the captain's mouthpiece in matters where the captain does not want to be bothered. He is supposed to keep the junior officers up to the scratch and to keep the crew well disciplined.

Also it is his duty to soothe his commander in times of stress, to take the blame for everything that goes wrong, and to be handy when the said commander wants to swear at some one for something. The mate's job is no snap; but it is a man's job, and he who can hold it down successfully is very likely to make a good captain when his chance comes.

Orville took another drink after Peterson had gone about his work and then went to make a tour of inspection of the ship himself. He lit a cigar and strode jauntily along, every now and then breaking into his peculiar little jog-trot, until he reached the chief's room. He knocked on the door; but, receiving no answer, he poked his head inside and saw the chief fast asleep in his bunk, worn out with nearly twenty-four hours of watching and fighting.

Orville shook his head and grunted. He knew that the chief's task was even more difficult than his own, for the chief had more men to handle and was shut in with them and in danger of an attack from behind at any time.

Orville liked the chief better than any other man aboard, except perhaps Peterson. He liked any man who got things done, for that matter. He chuckled softly as he caught sight of the twelve-inch shifting-spanner peeping from under the chief's pillow. Then he withdrew his head and softly closed the door, continuing aft.

He was about to descend the companion leading to the after well-deck when a strange smell assailed his nostrils. He sniffed and sniffed and glared all around, but could not locate the odor. Yet it seemed a familiar smell. He dimly remembered that he associated it with terrible things from his past—with half-forgotten savage wars, the night burnings of unnamed villages, dead men and head-hunters, cannibals.

It came to him in a flash with the last thought. Cannibals! The smell was of burning flesh, human flesh.

He made his way down to the well-deck ducked under the companion and entered the alleyway running fore and aft. The smell was stronger. Curious, Orville hurried for'ard, peered into the fiddley door, found nothing there, and at last reached the hooked-back iron door of the galley.

A curious dribbling noise assailed his ears as he approached. He looked inside the galley and for a moment was astonished. Also he felt a little sick.

The cook, whom Orville had made row the drunken second mate ashore in Apia, was now drunk himself, extremely drunk, drunker than any man Orville ever remembered seeing before who could stand on his feet. The squat, ungainly man with black, unshaven cheeks and vivid dark eyes, now blurred with liquor, was dressed only in a pair of greasy dark serge pants, rather too tight for him, and a white, stained steward's jacket with nothing underneath, exposing his hairy chest to plain view. From his big mouth dribbled saliva unceasingly, and he laughed and drooled with apparent happiness and squirmed with tortured nerves that he did not feel.

His actions were some of the strangest Orville had ever seen. The man was standing between the wooden carving-bench and the red-hot cooking-stove, facing the latter and rocking on his feet. He went back and forth with every light heave of the deck, first against the wooden bench behind him and then forward on to the stove.

The bench caught him in the middle of the back and held him when he went against it, but there was nothing to hold him when he fell the other way. Wherefore he invariably fell on his hands, the outstretched fingers resting full on the red-hot glowing top of the stove and sizzling horribly during the few short seconds they rested there.

The odor of burned flesh filled the galley, and the place was dense with smoke. The cook seemed absolutely insensible to pain as something that hurt, for he continued to laugh dribblingly.

Orville stepped inside the galley with an oath, and his face was a little white under his yellow skin. He felt sicker the nearer he approached the dribbling man. He took him by the shoulder and shook him, steadying against the pitch of the deck. But the man flung him off with an unintelligible mutter and promptly fell on the stove again. Orville grunted with some pity, for he knew that the man would be screaming with agony when the liquor died within him.

"I suppose this's the result of those two bottles you had in your cabin," the little millionaire snarled, and he swayed back a little and hit the cook with all his force under the ear.

The man went over sidewise with a fearful thud and then was still, stretched on the greasy, tiled floor. Just then the second cook came in with the steward, both looking rather scared. They halted for a moment when they saw Orville standing over the prostrate body, and then they came slowly forward.

"I went to get the steward to help me, sir," stammered the second cook with some uneasiness. "He's been drunk all the morning. It is terrible, terrible."

He looked down on the unconscious man, at the fearful crisp hands, and shuddered and covered his eyes for a moment.

Orville grunted.

"If I catch any of you with so much as a drain of whisky after this I'll log you good and hard. Is that clear? Help me get this poor —— to his room. We can do it between us. You, steward, go to my room and get the medicine-chest. Make it snappy. All right; take his legs, cook."

"His legs, yessir."

The second cook was a very sick man in the pit of his stomach, and his face was a pasty white. Perhaps the smell was the cause of that. Orville pulled him together with a few sharp words, and then the two of them carried the cook into his room and laid him carefully on the lower bunk of the two berths the room contained. The steward returned with the medicine chest, and Orville then proceeded to patch up the injured man as best he could.

The task was accomplished without the cook regaining consciousness, and Orville examined the cabin with care. He looked into the clothes locker and found nothing; he searched the locker under the washstand and found nothing; he turned the top bunk upside down without results; but under the bottom bunk, stowed far back in a dark corner behind a jumble of life-belts, shoes and old magazines, he found what he sought—two bottles. One was empty and the other but a quarter full.

He faced the second cook and the steward, who were standing by the open door watching him curiously, and he held up the part-full bottle against the light.

"This's the stuff that's caused more trouble than enough aboard this ship," he grumbled. "Just take my advice and leave it alone. It's stuff for strong men, and they're not found in your breed. Is that clear? All right, you can run away."

The two men with a murmured, "Yessir, yessir," turned and disappeared from view in the direction of the galley to get on with the cooking and the cleaning up. When they had gone Orville glanced at the inert figure in the lower bunk, bandaged clear up to his elbows, and grunted. Then he uncorked the bottle he held and took a long drink.

"Strong stuff, strong stuff," he murmured with a chuckle, and with a deft swing of his arm sent the bottle clear out of the door and through the gently swinging iron scupper port and so overside, narrowly missing a startled fireman who was just about to drop in at the galley and see if he could cadge a cup of coffee off the cook.

After a hasty glance inside the cabin the man retreated back to the fiddley and to the stokehole. He had no wish to draw on himself the wrath of the fiery little skipper.

"Scum!" snorted Orville, looking down on the unconscious cook. "Lord, man, but, you're in a —— of a shape. You'll be screaming blue murder when you come round. You for the hospital when we get to Sydney."

Then he left the cabin, closing the door softly behind him and muttering angrily to himself. There seemed to be nothing but accidents and fight happening on the *Ionia*. He began to understand why Captain Gillman had quit his job in Apia. What a crew, what a crew!

RETURNING aft along the alleyway, Orville came out on the welldeck once more and continued his way to the poop. He made a careful tour of the whole, unlashing the covers from the two boats in their chocks there and peering inside to see if they were in the condition they should be in, removing the covers from the wire reels to see that the wire was not too rusty; fumbling with the green, mildewed deep-sea sounding-machine, and generally ascertaining just what it was that needed to be done to the *Ionia* to make her a well-kept and well-equipped ship.

His inspection completed, he went for'ard and stopped at the break of the fo'csle, where the carpenter was mixing paint in a huge half-barrel, using a big paddle-shaped stick of wood as a pestle.

"Use plenty of driers, carpenter," Orville ordered. "We can't have the ship stinking paint for days. And I don't want to get my clothes jammed up with blasted red."

"Yessir," the carpenter mumbled and increased his speed with the pestle.

With a grunt of approval Orville watched the mixing-up process for a while and then continued on into the fo'csle alley and peered into the firemen's quarters.

The majority of the inmates were already in their bunks and asleep, most of them naked because of the heat, though a clanging of buckets from the steel wash-house right in the bows, to the port side of the forepeak hatch, told the little millionaire that the watch that had come off duty at eight bells was still busy removing the coating of coal-dust and sweat their four-hours below had allowed them to accumulate. He could see they had eaten; for the dirty kits, plates, pannikins and knives and forks still cluttered the table. The young Italian trimmer who had been appointed "peggy" was busy cleaning up. He looked around as he heard Orville snort, and he muttered a nervous "Goo' morni', sir," at the same time doubling his working speed.

"Huh! See that this floor's kept clean and the table scrubbed white. Is that clear? Inspection every morning at eleven in future. Understand?"

"Yessir, I'll see t' it."

Orville crossed the alleyway to the door of the sailors' fo'csle and was pleased to see that much of the damage wrought on the previous evening had been repaired, though the deck was still badly stained and scarred. The table had been patched up and replaced and the bunks shored up so as to be fairly level. The few men whose watch it was below were already turned in and were fast asleep, and the breakfast things had already been cleared away by one of their number.

Orville grunted and proceeded on to the forepeak hatch, which he found open. Thinking perhaps that some of the men were at the whisky again, he made sure of his automatic, loosening it in his pocket, and then dropped down the iron ladder to the orlop deck. A man was busy there turning over old sails and rope, rolling about drums of oil and paint and swearing profusely. He turned as Orville approached and grinned. It was Peterson.

"Hello. I was just looking over the stores, sir."

"Good. How's the old packet fixed?"

"Not at all well. I guess Matthews must have been hard up when he fitted her out."

"That's likely. The old fool's only good to sit and moan and guzzle whisky all day in Apia. He's old and feeble and broken-winded. Found out where they got the whisky from?"

"Yes; I took a look. Go right aft to the bulkhead there, behind those kegs of spikes. Here, I'll show you."

Peterson led the way to the bulkhead and, squeezing behind the stacked spike-kegs, showed Orville the open bulkhead door that led to the forehold. The electric light from the caged bulb in the deck-head near the forepeak shaft barely reached so far; but there was sufficient light to show up the burned-in lettering on the small square cases of Black & White the hold contained. Orville grunted.

"H'm! We'll close the door. Is the lock broken?"

Smashed to ——. The men had no key, of course."

"Swine! Only thing to do then is to keep the forepeak closed until we can get a man to repair the lock."

"That's the best way, sir. I think the carpenter's reliable."

"Yep. I don't think he'd let the crew below if he could help it. He's not so much reliable as scared, especially now that I know of the broken bulkhead and of the broached whisky. I might stop his pay if any more goes."

"That's so. Anything to do aft?"

"There is. There's a —— of a lot to be done. The hawsers are still coiled in the alleyways under the poop deck. Have them stowed on top of the cargo in the after hatch. The wires on the poop all want greasing, and the sounding-machine will have to have a new coil put in. Also the port lifeboat's got no water-breaker in. Is that clear? See to it."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Good. You want to be careful down here with the crew."

"I am careful," Peterson said grimly. "I'm beginning to get so I jump every time I hear a man behind me."

"Well, well. I'll be going on deck again."

Peterson went on with his task while Orville clambered back up the iron ladder to the fo'csle alley and went back to his room on the bridge deck. He called for the steward, glared at him and then ordered Scotch and soda. After that he relaxed a bit and started to make up his private log of the voyage so far.

VIII

ALL that day nothing of importance happened. The *Ionia* might just have been an ordinary happy-go-lucky tramp ship for all the excitement that occurred. Apparently the crew had been definitely crushed and beaten into submission.

Even the skeptical Peterson and the wise McKellip and Brown began to think that Slim Walker had had enough and was content to rest on his injuries, so to speak. Orville openly declared that this was so, but inwardly he knew it was a lie. He had only to recall the parts of conversation he had overheard the previous night to be quite sure of that.

Something was planned to break pretty soon. The mutineers were lying low for a bit, but presently they would come from cover and snarl again.

Nor was Orville wrong. But it was his own forgetfulness that started things. He should have remembered the conditions under which the *Ionia's* other officers vanished.

It was that night when the thing happened, in the eight-to-twelve or first watch. Orville was in the chart-house poring over a chart and a note-book with Peterson and intent on checking up his noon "sight" with the aid of his position by dead reckoning. From his profanity it was evident that something had gone wrong with the figures.

"Brown!"

He called out of the door to the third mate, who was slowly pacing the bridge, his head bent on his chest and his hands clasped behind him. He came with orderly haste at the sound of the little millionaire's voice and looked into the brightly lighted chart-house.

"Sir?"

"You might go aft and take a look at the log," Orville snarled testily, scratching out a batch of figures with vicious haste.

"Do you want *me* to go, sir? The only man free on watch is helping the carpenter do something in the lazaret."

There were only three men to a watch on the *Ionia* with the removal of McKellip and Brown from the crew. One took the lookout at night, another the wheel, and that left just one to do odd jobs about the ship in case of necessity.

Orville never thought. All his life afterward he was sorry for his hasty words that followed Mr. Brown's very understandable question and desire to make sure he had heard aright.

"Do I want you to go? What the —— do you think I asked you for? Run along aft and get those figures. Snappy now!" he said.

He bent to his figures for a moment and then looked up abruptly.

"What's the matter? Don't you feel well?" he asked.

The third mate was still standing in the doorway, a peculiar expression on his face. His eyes were wide and staring, and his lips parted beneath his short beard. He gazed through Orville as if watching something a vast distance away.

He had received an order. He knew what it meant, the consequences of his obedience. He was an old Navy man, used to obeying. Orville had questioned his courage once. He did not intend he should do so again.

But he had received a shock on getting the order. For hideous weeks he had lived with the *Ionia's* crew, and he knew their tricks. His face was pasty.

Peterson looked up from a pair of parallel rulers and stared. Orville grunted and spoke sharply.

"Run along to the cabin, Peterson, and get the whisky. Brown looks as though he's seeing things."

Peterson laid down his rulers with a murmur of assent and started to turn, but the third mate recovered himself with a shaky smile and held out a retaining hand.

"Whisky—not whisky, sir. It isn't whisky. I thought I heard Maggie calling.

"There's a little house outside London—

Cricklewood. Ever hear of it? Green-and-white curtains. Red brick with railings round the garden. Maggie grows daisies and geraniums there. Gawd, an' I came to sea!

"Funny how a man's fancy plays tricks, sir, isn't it? I can hear Maggie calling now plain. Fine woman, more like a mother than a wife. Married me when I was O. D. in the Navy.

"Ever seen Cricklewood when the grass is green in Spring an' the birds chirp from the old oaks? There's lanes there, cool and shady——"

"Have you been drinking?" snarled Orville suspiciously, leaning forward and sniffing. "No, you haven't. What's the matter with you, man?"

"—and winding. Larks and buttercups, and then Maggie waiting. Beg pardon, sir. I feel kind of queer tonight. Did you say the log, sir? Yessir, I'll see."

He touched the peak of his cap with a forefinger that was visibly trembling and moved away, pausing as he reached the edge of the light shaft that cut the darkness from the chart-house door. He heard the helmsman, an Italian this time, chuckle and send a low, clear whistle for'ard.

It was the signal.

"Funny thing how a man's fancy— The log, sir. Yessir, I'll see," he called back, gulping.

Then he was gone, descending the companion to the after well-deck and groping aft in the starlight, muttering to himself. He would never have his courage questioned again. Perhaps the captain was testing him.

Orville glared at Peterson. Peterson frowned at him.

"Well, I'll be ——!" the little millionaire said.

Peterson scratched his head and then shook it slowly.

"Queer fellow, Brown," he observed.

"I didn't need to be told. C'm'long here an' le's get this blasted sight worked out again. What were your figures on the arc?"

Peterson went out on the bridge after a moment or two to keep Mr. Brown's watch until he should return. Orville fussed and fumed and swore without cessation over his note-book and chart. The helmsman's face, only partly to be seen in the glow from the binnacle, wore an ugly grin for some reason or other that did not improve features already badly battered from the previous night's combat.

After about fifteen minutes Orville looked up impatiently at the clock screwed on the chart-house bulkhead. Then he called out of the door.

"Hi, Peterson, where the ——'s Brown?"

"Hasn't come back yet, sir," Peterson returned, coming from the lee bridge wing where he had been watching a star low down on the horizon and wondering whether it could be a ship's mast-head light.

"Huh! Wonder what the —— he's doing," snorted the little millionaire.

Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him. He stiffened as if he were listening to something very far away. The pencil rolled from his hand across the note-book leaves. Unheeded, the ash from the cigar he was smoking fell in a gray cloud on the white chart. He went very white. Slowly he turned to Peterson, who stood in the doorway, leaning against the jamb.

"You remember, Peterson, what he said?"

Orville's voice was curiously strained.

"He heard Maggie or some one calling. They say—they say when a man—is going to die— My God, I sent him aft! And he knew. You understand?"

Peterson straightened abruptly, and his face set into hard lines.

"Presentiment they call it," Orville went on hoarsely.

Then, arousing himself with a jerk:

"——! This doesn't do any good. Perhaps ——"

He did not finish, but Peterson got his thought and nodded and frowned. McKellip came up just then, whistling cheerfully, and stuck his head inside the chart-house.

"Hello, hello, hello! Everything O. K., sir?"

"No, it's not. And stop that blasted whistling. Peterson, go aft and see what's happened. Better take McKellip with you. Hurry. Got a gun?"

"I've got one, sir. How about you, McKellip?"

"Got a claw-hammer in my room."

"Huh! Here, take this automatic. I've another somewhere. And *stop* that blasted whistling! Didn't you hear me the first time?"

"Yes, sir."

McKellip stopped abruptly. He grinned

and pocketed the automatic Orville handed him; but the little millionaire was not in the mood for grinning.

"Then shut up!" he snarled. "Now get aft, the pair of you, and watch out for yourselves. Watch out!"

As the two mates nodded and went out on the bridge Orville followed them aft to the companion which led down to the well-deck. He called as they descended—

"Don't be afraid to shoot if there's anything funny going on!"

"We won't," Peterson returned dryly as he landed on the well-deck from the last step of the companion.

He started aft, followed by McKellip, who had started whistling again, though very softly. Suddenly Peterson stopped with an oath. Orville, peering through the starlight from the vantage point of the companion-head, thought he saw a shadowy form drop from the main rigging above the two mates and after sundry movements disappear aft.

Peterson ripped out another oath, and there came a short, hoarse cry from McKellip, who pitched suddenly forward, rolled over once or twice and then lay still in the scuppers. Peterson's revolver coughed spasmodically and the lurid red flashes stabbed the darkness.

"Come back!" Orville screamed. "They've got you in a trap. Come back, Jackie!"

"Come nothing! The swine have knifed McKellip!"

PETERSON'S bull-like voice echoed in the little millionaire's ears. He saw the yellow-haired giant leave the side of the stricken McKellip and charge madly aft toward the deep gloom of the poop, pumping lead ahead of him. Orville hammered with rage on the iron rail at the head of the companion.

"The blasted fool! The blasted young fool!" he snarled.

Then he turned and ran for his cabin. He had not gone a dozen steps when a dark figure rose in his path and swung a short wooden club with frightful force at his head. Orville acted mechanically, his quick mind grasping matters at once. He dived for the figure's legs, wrapped his arms round them and jerked upward.

There was a frightened oath. The club flew wide. The figure came down on the deck with a jar that seemed to shake the ship. Orville let go the threshing legs and jumped on a half-seen face, once, twice. The figure lay still then. Without waiting Orville ran on to his cabin. He flung back the door with a crash, dashed in, switched on the light, dodged with a lightning-like twist a blow aimed at his head with an empty bottle by the steward, and then pitched the man over his head and out on to the deck with a deft ju-jutsu throw. By the time the steward had got back some measure of his wind and regained his feet, Orville had secured his other automatic and a few clips of cartridges. He was ready also for further action.

"You slab-faced swine!" he snarled. "I'll show you where you get off at. Jump, you dog-eared mutt, jump! By the seven islands of Manu, I'll plug you so full of holes you'll— Ah, would you?"

In despair the steward, regaining his feet, had rushed back full tilt, stumbled over the brass-edged storm-step of the door and pitched at Orville's feet. The little millionaire reached down and rapped him smartly over the head with the butt of his automatic, and the steward was temporarily out of the mutiny.

Back on the bridge the fuming Orville saw that the helmsman had deserted his post and that the *Ionia* swung broadside to the easy swell, her light lift and fall changing to a gentle rolling motion. The man who had attacked Orville by the head of the after companion came running profanely along with his club again, a little dazed by the punishment he had already received.

Orville swung round from his contemplation of the empty wheel-grating and stepped flat against the chart-house. The running, swearing man crossed the beam of light from the open house door, was momentarily stricken blind as he plunged into the darkness the other side and so failed to see Orville.

The little millionaire put out his foot and tripped the other very neatly. Then he jumped on his face again and finished him by rapping him over the head as he had previously done to the obstreperous steward. He rolled the man over so that a faint gleam from the binnacle fell on his face. It was the helmsman. The distant sound of conflict, swearing, yells, came to his ear from the direction of the engine-room.

"All a put-up job, eh?" Orville grunted wrathfully. "I ought to have stopped to hear what that Walker swine had to say last night. And my God, it was I who killed Brown!"

But there was no time to waste in regrets. Orville grew suddenly very cool, icily cool. His hands, which ordinarily showed a nervous tremble, were now steady. He was the sort of man who gets fearfully excited before a crisis and deadly cool once it has broken.

He turned and ran lightly to the after companion and dropped down to the well-deck. He could see no one and could hear nothing. Peterson's revolver had not coughed for some minutes, nor could the giant's voice be heard. The whole poop and the alleyways beneath brooded in darkness and in silence. Peterson had disappeared into the mass somewhere, but there was nothing to tell what had become of him.

There was nothing to tell who had killed McKellip. It was a mutiny by stealth and in darkness right enough.

Orville grunted coldly and dropped to his knees beside the inert form of McKellip. After a cautious look around and aloft to see that no man had him at a disadvantage, he turned the body over. The Yankee's days were done without a doubt. He had even been killed without time to fight, a flung knife piercing his ribs just below the heart and another his throat just above the thyroid gland.

Orville grunted again, removed the automatic he had so recently given the second mate and transferred it to his own left hip pocket so that he was doubly armed. He peered keenly from under his white seaman's cap toward the poop where he knew the mutineers must be watching and waiting for him to come and look for Peterson, and where he guessed the dead body of Peterson must also be. The latter thought very nearly unnerved him.

"What'll I tell Allie?" he whispered to himself. "What'll I tell her?"

Allie, his niece, was engaged to Jack Peterson, the blue-eyed, yellow-haired, good-natured giant. It was hard. Orville loved Peterson more as a son anyway than as a friend or employee.

But the millionaire was never long in sentimental moods. He had been reared in an iron school. Before this he had known the anguish of parting, the sadness of death. He had seen better men than he die uselessly and bravely; he had seen his friends, his own brothers, his partners, pass out from fever and spear and Snider bullet, never from old age. And he had become more or less inured.

He was a relic of a past generation, a survivor of terrible things, and life for him held little, hardly even the passion of revenge. Whisky and will-power were all that kept him alive as it was. It was an everlasting miracle to the island doctors how his heart stood the strain.

The more Orville was up against odds usually the harder he fought and the more alert he became. He glared slowly all around. His lips drew to a straight line, and he breathed heavily on his wisp of mustache.

He rose slowly to his feet and took a pace backward. And as he did so a knife-blade gleamed for a moment in a shaft of starlight and then fell with a soft hissing thud in the deck a little to one side and behind him. Two inches lower down and it would have buried itself in his head.

With a rumble of anger he retreated to the foot of the companion, facing the poop still in case of a rush. He wished it were day instead of night. The dark favored the mutineers. He cursed himself for not taking precautions to meet such an emergency. He could have had signal flares or something else rigged that would give light.

He mounted the companion slowly, and stood at last on the bridge deck. A hand touched his arm, and he whirled round like a flash and ducked and very nearly shot Mackenzie in the stomach. The chief's twelve-inch shifting-spanner was all that saved him. He dropped it lightly on Orville's wrist and deflected the automatic enough so that the shot plowed the deck instead of through the Scotchman's body.

"Why, chief!" Orville panted. "I thought you were one of the skunks taking a swipe at me. Lucky I missed. Kinda nervous work t'night."

"Soo Ah'll be thinkin'. Ye'll ken thin's are in a bad way."

"A little; a little. I've just lost three officers. But I'll have things shaped up in an hour or two. I'll show 'em!"

"An' Ah've lost thrree engineers. Also Ah've lost ma engine-room."

"Eh?"

" 'Tis true. Ye dinna ken th' harrdships o' ma job. Th' murderin' chiels ha' kilt ma thrree picked men an' well-nigh kilt me too. Ah had t' leave th' place somewha' in a rush. Ah thought one live mon's better'n ten dead. An' I call you t' witness Ah've kep' oop steam s' long as was hoomanlee possible."

"All right, chief. You're a good man, and I'll make it up to you, never fear. Let the engine-room go to —— for a while. My whole crew's had the —— impudence to mutiny."

"'Tis too bad," the chief murmured, shifting his grip on his spanner and moving his left arm comfortably in his sling.

Blood dripped from a fresh cut over his brow, but he took no notice. His greasy blue-serge jacket was in ribbons. Three men lay stunned with cracked heads in the stokehole below, but Mackenzie did not consider the fact worth mentioning now that he knew the whole crew was in open mutiny apparently.

"I'm thinking—" observed Orville after a moment's silence.

" 'Tis a bad habit. But soomtimes it'll worrk."

"—that it'd be a good idea to have a drink."

Mackenzie chuckled.

"Ye sh'd 'a' been a Scotchmon," he said.

"I wouldn't have paid thirty thousand for this bundle of grief had I been. Well, le's go."

ORVILLE led the way to his cabin and rummaged in the locker for the whisky and glasses. On the bridge outside the wounded helmsman could be heard groaning monotonously to himself over his injuries. On the floor of the cabin the steward was just beginning to stir and sigh. Mackenzie looked down on him thoughtfully and then up at the industrious Orville.

"Is thi' chiel one o' them, sorr?"

"Yep. I beaned him with a Colt. Swine had the nerve to handle one of my whisky-bottles."

"Guid way, b't na so eeffective as a spanner. We'll suppose he's still dangerous. Ah c'n quiet him."

The chief leaned down and rapped the steward smartly over the head with his spanner. The unfortunate man ceased stirring uneasily and sighing and lapsed into unconsciousness again. He would be unavailable for some time.

"Here's how," said Orville calmly as he lifted his half-filled glass.

"T' yere heal'."

The chief drank slowly, appreciatively, a wild-looking figure with his slung arm, his shiny spanner, his flaming mustache and his battle-worn garments.

A man stepped into the shaft of light from the open doorway of the cabin. Orville, seeing him over the top of his tilted glass, raised his automatic without ceasing to drink, but after a moment lowered it again. The chief merely squinted out of one eye and poised his spanner in case of attack. The man was the carpenter.

"Please—please, sir, don't think I'm in with all this," the man commenced falteringly, taking in the steward's inert body with frightened eyes.

He was a lean, gray-bearded Welshman. Some men thought him a little crazy, and perhaps he was. But he was a good sailor, like Orville a relic of older, wilder, sterner days, a man of the old clipper ships, equally adept at carpentering, sailmaking, or just plain able seaman's work.

He fixed his bloodshot, faded blue eyes on Orville after he spoke, without devoting one glance to the chief.

Orville finished his drink and refilled his glass before replying. He nodded to Mackenzie, who emptied his first glass and passed it for refilling also. Orville then grunted and examined his liquor against the light from the electric bulb in the deck head. Then he turned to the anxiously awaiting carpenter.

"There's going to be trouble round here, a heap of trouble," he snarled. "I'm dealing out sudden death and pain indiscriminate from now on. Is that clear? I'm glad to find out you're not one of that murd'rous mob, carpenter."

"Is there anything I can do for you, sir?" the old man pleaded, anxious to prove to his captain that he was loyal.

Orville considered for a moment, sipped his liquor and then looked at Mackenzie. But apparently the last thought the chief had in mind was one of combating the mutiny.

"Ah wonner wha's goin' on in Glasgaw t'ni'," he murmured softly to the bottom of his glass.

Orville grunted.

"Well," he said at last to the carpenter, "you might do one thing. Open the forepeak."

"The forepeak, sir?"

The man's eyes bulged. He must have thought his captain had gone mad. He couldn't see the connection.

"Sure, the forepeak. And leave it open. Is that clear? Don't stand there gaping like a blasted fool! Do as you're told!"

"Yessir, yessir; the forepeak, sir. But you won't think I'm mixed up——"

"I think nothing. Open that forepeak, leave it open, and recall to the crew the whisky's down there, and I'll see you come out all right. Come here and take a drink."

"No, sir; no, sir; I'd rather not, sir. I don't drink, sir. You see my father's brother used to——"

"Naturally. Run along now."

"Yessir; the forepeak, sir."

Bobbing his head, the old man disappeared into the darkness beyond the beam of light from the cabin door.

"An' mi' Ah ask th' connection 'tween th' forepeak an' th' mutineers, sorr?"

"You can. Whisky!"

"I' th' forepeak?"

"In the hold. They broke the bulkhead door down."

"An' 'tis still doon?"

"It is."

"Ah fear ye sh'd have kept th' forepeak shut. Ye'll ken we'll be thurrsty oursel's when th' war is pas'."

The chief shook his head sadly. What a waste of good Scotch!

"Uh-huh!" grunted Orville indifferently. "But the crew'll be easier to handle if they're drunk. Well, le's go."

"Wha to?"

"How the —— should I know? On the bridge, I guess. I'm still thinking about my two mates—three mates I should say. Three good men gone in a night. Isn't it always so, Mackenzie?"

His voice grew sad and reflective.

"You're a man who's traveled and ventured. Isn't it always the way when a man picks up with a decent, clean-cut, get-it-done bunch? Something always happens to split them up. They die, get killed or married, or go away—away.

"There were four of us in the old island days—McGoff, Severn, Hawke and myself. All gone except Hawke, an' he sails his own ship still from Apia. McGoff died of a spear wound in the Louisade bush; saved m' life then. Severn went out with blackwater on the West Coast, near Sierra Leone. We were running a Chinese slaveship at the time. All gone.

"I knew Hayes and Towns and Roberts in the old days. They're gone. Never knew it to fail. It's like the blasted rain that comes and turns a smiling garden into a marsh that reeks and steams. Every time you get in with a good bunch something happens.

"But I'm an old fool, chief. I can't locate any sort of a plan yet. Suggest anything?"

"Na, na, I canna thin' either, 'cept ye sh'n' let th' forepeak b' lef' open."

"You drunken Scotchman! All you think of is whisky and steam."

"So, so. Men have died f' less."

The two went on the bridge, Mackenzie peering cautiously out of the cabin before exposing his body, in the chance that some one might be waiting to hit him so soon as he showed. Orville switched off the light and closed the cabin door behind him. No one was in sight save the still groaning helmsman.

With Mackenzie at his heels Orville made for the for'ard dodger and peered over. There was no one in sight on the foredeck. Apparently the mutineers had decided to let the bridge severely alone, or had depended on the helmsman and the steward being able to handle Orville.

The little millionaire cupped his hands round his mouth and sent a hail to the fo'csle head. But there was no answering hail. It was apparent that the lookout was among the mutineers aft or 'midships or wherever they happened to be. Mackenzie shook his head mournfully.

"'Tis no manner o' use t' shout. They have us guid an' proper."

"Shut up croaking. I'm still master of this packet, and I'll have her trim and shipshape by this time t'morrow."

"Ah'm no' sayin' ye're no' a wunnerful mon, sorr," the chief responded. "But ye have 'n awful task afore ye."

"I've handled worse."

"Mebbe, mebbe. Well, ye c'n coun' on me f' anythin'. Ah've nought t' live for."

"Well, don't keep on croaking then. Shut up and get cheerful," Orville snarled.

Then suddenly—

"I'm going aft!"

"Is no' that wha' th' crew is?"

"It is. And that's where my mates are too."

"Is there any chan' soever o' gettin' at 'em?"

"Not by deck. But come an' I'll show you a way, you —— Scotchman. Wanta gun?"

"Na, na; Ah have ma ——"

"Keep your —— spanner. C'm' long. You'll want y' nerve."

"Ah've tha' all th' time. Ah ne'er foun' a mon yet that'd go wha Ah c'dn'."

"Good. Now grab that spanner of yours, walk soft, *and—shut—up!*"

The two men moved silently aft.

IX

WHEN Peterson left the side of the stricken McKellip and charged aft shooting wildly, he had no clear idea of what he was going to do, or even of what he was doing. He acted on his primitive passions and promptings.

Unlike Orville he had no imagination and was as cool as an icicle to the point where a crisis actually broke. Then he was apt to fly loose, so to speak. He grew excited. He was at an age where he made an excellent second in command. In ten years' time perhaps he would be a good first in command. But he had yet to learn the principles of control and balance.

So it was that when a man dropped from the ratlines of the main rigging almost at McKellip's feet and threw a knife with terrific force into the astonished second officer, Peterson had known at first utmost coolness. He had turned to the stricken Yankee to see if he was hurt when the man had fled to the blackness by the poop. McKellip had swayed a bit on his feet, sworn a bitter oath and coughed, but not fallen. It was not until another knife came from the darkness aft and took him in the throat that he pitched forward and rolled in the scuppers.

Peterson had bent over the body, noticed the knife protruding from the vital spot, caught McKellip's dying whisper of "Sorry for—the —— Britisher. Had a wife—kids—kids and—" as he also caught the last little twinkle in the Yankee's glazing eyes.

McKellip had crumbled at last, a few seconds only after the second knife, and then Peterson had gone mad. In an excess of terrible rage, his whole magnificent body aching to tear some one from limb to limb, he tore aft in the direction from which the last knife had come. He did not even remember shouting back to Orville. He was a fighting-machine pure and simple, unconscious of or indifferent to odds.

No knives had come from the darkness to meet him. He saw nothing until he plunged into the alleyway under the poop deck on the starboard side. Then he caught a vague glimpse of forms closing on him.

They had him at a disadvantage. He was coming from the starlight into the shadow. They could see him much more clearly than he could see them.

He tripped over a rope stretched knee high and fell forward in a long, profane sprawl. He was on his feet almost at the same instant that a dozen men's hands fastened on him. He bellowed with rage, shot away the last cartridge in his revolver and then commenced to deal maiming blows with his great fists.

The fight raged for nearly three minutes. No attempt was made to knife the trapped man—he understood why later on—but at the same time there was little respect shown for his personal health. He was kicked and punched and chewed and scratched, and thrice hit over the head with a piece of two-b'-four, such as is used for stowing cargo, before he went limp and pitched to the deck, dragging half a dozen men with him.

"Tie him up and pitch him in the wheelhouse. We'll have that —— rat of a skipper here in a few minutes."

Slim Walker's voice had lost all the smoothness it had once possessed. It had lost it since the defeat in the fo'csle the previous night.

The man had become an individual with a naked, raw soul, a raging fiend to whom revenge in the most melodramatic sense was now sweeter than anything else in the world.

There is nothing that can hurt so much as a blow to a man's personal vanity. And for Slim Walker, who had been in his day likened by beautiful women to a Greek god, to be forced to go through life with a disfigured face was terrible.

Indeed, he honestly believed that Peterson had as good as killed him when he had smashed his nose. As a prospective gentleman and a mover in the set his soul craved, he was finished with a ruined face. He was dead so far as his life-long ambition was concerned. And when a man's greatest and most cherished dream has crumbled nothing else seems to matter much for quite a long time.

With the ruining of his classical features Slim Walker had forgotten all about his original desire to capture the *Ionia*, and also what that desire was based on. Everything went to the winds while he plotted personal vengeance.

He was not thinking of the five thousand pounds in silver in the captain's cabin when he saw his plans rapidly and successfully maturing. Nor was he plotting ahead as to what he would do when the *Ionia* was his.

His only desire was to tear the very face off of the yellow-haired giant mate, to feel the life leave the corded throat under his tightening fingers, to see the blue eyes burn, then fade, relax and glaze. That was the reason the knives had been flung in the first place at McKellip and not at Peterson. Walker wanted the latter alive if possible. He would have Peterson killed only after he had finished with him.

Leaving four men to guard the poop and to watch in the event of Orville putting in an appearance—he could be heard in conflict on the bridge deck—Walker went with the rest of his followers—he had firemen and all behind him now—into the wheel-house with his captive.

As soon as the door clanged shut the lights were switched on, the portholes having been previously made opaque by the iron storm-shutters having been dropped over them and screwed tightly down. Thus it was that the alleyways under the poop were as dark as ever in spite of the lighted wheel-house.

Peterson was pitched against the port bulkhead, opposite the great cogged quadrant that moved the rudder when the steam gear was operated from the wheel on the bridge. But the quadrant did not move now, and the steam gear was silent and still save for a slight hissing of steam.

A long-drawn, sighing sort of clanking came from the rudder which ran up beside the pivot of the quadrant, as the seas swung the rudder first one way and then the other.

The air of the wheel-house was hot and reeking with steam and oil, doubly hot because of the tropic night outside. The scent of packed humanity did not tend to improve matters at all, and the stench as a whole was enough to make any one save a sailor turn somewhat sick.

The floor was a mess of grease and [illegible] and burned matches and red paint that was somewhat sticky, never having had a proper chance to dry. To the after end of the house above the pivot post of the massive quadrant and to either side of it, blocks and tackles, lamps and coal-sacks and fire-buckets hung from a rope stretched between two big shackles fastened into holes in the steel deckhead beams. This assortment of junk moved with a rattle and a grating, harsh, rubbing noise every time the *Ionia* pitched or rolled.

Slim Walker looked down on his captive and would have sneered had not the action been too painful for his battered and bandaged nose. So he spat to supplement what would have been a sneer if a twinge of pain hadn't checked it.

The yellow-haired giant, still unconscious, was bound hand and foot with a couple of heaving-lines. A frapped seizing held his elbows behind him, and a similar lashing held his knees together. No man has ever succeeded in getting out of that tie-up when made by seamen.

The mutineers present—consisting of every one on the ship excepting only the carpenter, the steward and the helmsman, the four left outside to watch, and the firemen left in the engine-room—crowded round in a big semicircle. Several of them were injured slightly, some from the chief's spanner. The engine-room, after the expulsion of Mackenzie and the killing of his three engineers, had been nearly deserted. Practically every one was aft.

SLIM WALKER, nursing his shot and bandaged wrist, stirred his captive in the ribs with his shoe toe.

"Come on! Quit that shamming. Hold your head up. Fetch a bucket of water, one of you, and wash the swine's head."

A coal-blackened fireman with a cruel, thin mouth and beady, violet-colored eyes took a fire-bucket off the rope line aft and disappeared out of one of the doors, the lights being switched off until he had closed the door behind him. He knocked before he entered again, and the lights were switched off until he had closed the door once more. Thus the alleyways were still kept in darkness.

The man who had brought the water dashed it violently into Peterson's face, to the great glee of the mutineers, who laughed amongst themselves and took turns in kicking the prostrate man.

He very slowly came to, lifting his splitting head wearily and blinking in the bright light. He suddenly became aware that he was very wet and sore and bruised. Every solitary bone and muscle in his body felt to be aching and individually and collectively complaining and crying out in protest.

Stupidly he looked down and wriggled his arms. He saw his tied legs stretched on the clammy, greasy deck before him and knew that his arms must be tied likewise. He could scarce feel his hands at all, so numb were they.

He looked up and into the leering grin of the violet-eyed man who had brought the sea-water. He let his somewhat fuddled gaze wander from the violet-eyed man over the semicircle of grinning, cruel faces of the scum of the world, men beyond the pale.

Peterson shivered a little. He wondered where Orville was. Then he remembered he had left him on the bridge deck at the head of the after companion. Also he remembered McKellip and the twinkle of his eye, his brave spirit, the fire of the race within him that had made him so likable. And the knife-haft protruding from McKellip's lean throat. Peterson's shiver of apprehension turned to a quiver of rage. But he did not speak.

"Awake at last, eh?" snarled Slim Walker; and, drawing back his foot, he deliberately kicked his captive full in the face with all his force, banging Peterson's head with a terrific crack against the steel bulkhead behind him and very nearly stunning him.

Peterson groaned involuntarily and sniffed with the same lack of volition. He could feel his nose pouring blood and knew it was skinned completely. Also he knew his lips were split. He spat feebly, and Slim Walker grinned with triumph.

"Now you know how I felt when you hit me, —— you!"

"Wish I'd 'a' made it harder. Man, I could have killed you had I——"

Walker kicked at him again even more viciously than before; but this time by a quick twist of his head Peterson evaded the punishing shoe and allowed it to strike the steel bulkhead with toe-tingling force. Walker spat out an oath and hopped about on one leg, holding his injured extremity with his one sound hand.

There was a yelp of delight and a burst of laughter from the mutineers. They could enjoy pain from their leader as well as from his victim.

"I'll repay that in about five minutes," Walker grated gaspingly, endeavoring to grin himself.

He looked hideous in his bandaged face and with his swollen, bandaged wrist; and his dark eyes glowed big and flaming with deep, undying hatred. He dropped his foot gingerly to the floor after a while and then, taking the fire-bucket from the man who brought the sea-water, he turned it upside down on the floor and sat on it, facing Peterson, who looked him full in the eyes and waited tensely.

"Now, Mr. Mate, I'll say a few words before I start smashing that pretty face of yours to ribbons. Then I'll kill you. You disfigured me for life by interfering between that little swine of a skipper and myself, and soon I'm going to get even.

"You'd have done well to stay in Apia instead of coming on this packet. She's mine now; d' you get that? Your precious Mr.—Brown, a stinking Englisher you dragged up from the fo'csle, is dead and food for fishes."

"So's Tim Corrony," put in the man with the violet eyes with a grin.

There was a sullen murmur of assent from the surrounding semicircle.

"Yes," agreed Slim Walker; "so's Tim Corrony. Your precious Mr. Brown jumped overboard with him, if that'll please you to hear, as soon as he saw he was trapped and couldn't get away."

Peterson mustered a twisted grin.

"Good for Brown!" he said.

His inquisitor leant forward and caught him a backhand blow across the mouth.

"I'll do the talking! McKellip, the traitorous ——, is dead. He's got a couple o' knives in him as no doubt you know. They could 'a' been just as easy put into you; but I wanted you for a little plan of my own, savvy? And with McKellip dead and Brown dead and you a prisoner who'll soon be dead, who's there left to help you?

"That rat of a skipper's no —— good; don't think so for a minute. There's two men attending to him now. The helmsman knew what to do when you left the bridge, and I sent the steward to help him.

"Thought he was clever—didn't you?—the skipper breaking our knife-points like they did in the old days, so I've heard. Well, all we had to do was to take some more from the bundle the carpenter keeps for scraping bright-work with. Easy, wasn't it?

"An' it was so easy for the surviving man of the two I sent aft, when the helmsman whistled and told us some one was easy game, to come and tell me when Brown was got out of the way. I guessed you fools 'd come and look for him so I rustled all hands aft and told the 'black crowd' to start their little dance below. They did. They wiped out their bosses.

"You see, I knew it'd be easy to trap you birds when you came along in the dark. An' these dagoes here c'n throw knives like birds. You came t' look for the English fool just as I suspected. You were —— careless about it.

"We waited for you, all hands. See, the firemen are all here with me, 'cept two I let tend the donkey boiler and keep the lights goin'. That lanky Scotchman is keeping company with your swine of a skipper, and they're both shaking in their shoes now if they aren't already dead. They ought to be by now; I sent two men to finish 'em. We'll clean 'em out before morning if they're not anyway. Plenty of time.

"They can't do a thing. If they try to come aft my men'll get 'em. And if they stay on the bridge we can surround them and starve 'em to death. I've got everything thought out. You'll admit my reasoning was and is good?

"You yellow-haired, stinkin' square-head, now I'm going to show you just where you come in in the little scheme. Harry, hand me the mallet."

The man with the violet eyes grinned evilly and chuckled. He pushed his way through the grinning semicircle. The mutineers had already tasted blood, had felt the keen thrill of killing, and they were licking their lips in anticipation of indulging in more, or at the least in seeing more.

Harry pushed back again in a few moments, bearing a heavy short-handled, long-barreled and iron-banded calking-mallet. Slim Walker took it in his one sound hand and rose to his feet shaking it menacingly back and forth. His dark eyes glittered and glowed.

"I'm going to smash in your face with this, Mr. Mate. I'm going to calk your skull with the meat of your good looks. I'm going to tear every last bloody, rotten, crawling bit of flesh off your front, you yellow-haired——"

Peterson went white, but he never flinched.

"Mutiny carries a death penalty. Ever thought of that? These seas are pretty well patrolled by Great Britain and other big nations.

"Don't be a fool, man. Put down that mallet and untie me. If a cruiser comes along and finds you wandering about without officers you'll have to do some tall explaining, believe me. I appeal to you men."

The helpless giant's voice held just the vaguest hint of a tremor. The bravest would have known the pangs of horror at what Slim Walker was about to do.

But the semicircle of eager men merely grinned at the victim's pleas. Slim Walker's voice rose to almost a scream. He was panting in the delicious anticipation of passion about to be realized. His heart could almost be heard, so violent was its beating. His eyes dwelt hotly, caressing and burning, on Peterson's face as they had never dwelt on a beautiful woman. He raised the calking-mallet shoulder high and waited to still his shaking limbs.

"Cruisers be ——! The whole of the British Empire and the United States combined couldn't stop me now. Never you worry about me, Mr. Mate. Just worry about your pretty face. You'll go faceless to your grave, which'll be the sea.

"If I thought you had a woman waiting anywhere for you I'd preserve your smashed head and send it to her. Hold his head still between your knees, Harry."

The man with the violet eyes slipped between the bulkhead and Peterson's back. He opened his legs and gripped the yellow-haired head with his bony knees, squeezing them together to make sure the giant should not twist clear.

"Don't hit me," Harry said anxiously.

There was a general laugh. Slim Walker scowled and frowned.

"Don't be a fool. I sha'n't hit you. I'm hitting Mr. Mate's nose a bit. I'll have him needing *my* bandages before I'm through."

"Give me a fighting chance, Walker," pleaded Peterson desperately. "I'll fight four of you with knives if you like. Only let me die on my feet, not tied up like a chicken."

"Go ahead and 'it 'im, Slim," sang out one man from the crowd.

There was a chorus of "Go ahead." Peterson shivered, but he kept his eyes fixed unwinking on Walker's face.

The disfigured man grinned evilly and raised the mallet as far above his head as he could. Then he swung it down and outward, aiming full for the mate's face, already streaked with blood from a bleeding nose and a split lip.

The blow was a bad one. Slim Walker's right wrist had a bullet in it and was useless. He was using his left hand to trip the mallet with, and any one who is normally right-handed can not aim very well with an awkward calking-mallet gripped in the unfamiliar left hand.

The blow hit Peterson violently on the left shoulder, turning him sick and starting the cold sweat breaking out on his forehead. He had flinched as he caught the wind of the blow by his ear and had thought his face was gone.

The blow had also just grazed Harry's knee, and that worthy protested noisily. But Slim Walker took no heed. He was now past all reason and calmness, and he swung the heavy mallet up again with a shrill oath and prepared for another blow which this time should come nearer the mark.

WHEN Orville and Mackenzie reached the after end of the bridge deck, past the engineers' empty quarters, the little millionaire, motioning for absolute silence, drew the lean chief's ear down to his own mouth, so close that his wisp of sandy mustache tickled as he spoke.

"I'm going to try the derricks, chief. It'll have to be done quietly. If they hear us they might see us, and they'll throw their —— knives or wait till we run into a trap. Then we'll have to go back and think of something else. Is that clear?"

The chief nodded his head violently to show that he understood; and, slipping his twelve-inch shifting-spanner into his hip-pocket and buttoning the same to make sure the weapon did not fall out, he prepared to follow Orville.

Now the *Ionia* carried just four derricks on her mainmast—thick, well-oiled booms used for lifting cargo from the holds and depositing it on the wharf or *vice versa*. When not in use these derricks, two stretching aft from the mast for use over number four hatch, two stretching for'ard for use over number three hatch, were lowered by means of the great falls that held them, *via* a heavy gin-block shackled on to the cross-trees and a stout wire that ran from the boom-head through the gin and so down to the top of a big four-sheaved block and tackle, the fall, which ran up and down the mast, fastening at the bottom by means of another four-sheave block hooked to a dead-eye in the deck.

When lowered, each derrick fell into a slot made for it on the for'ard edge of the poop deck. That was in the case of the after stretching-derricks. In the case of those stretching for'ard a slot waited for each in the edge of the bridge deck, abaft the engineers' quarters.

Thus it was that when all derricks were lowered and lashed into place, they lay straight with the well-deck about ten feet or so above it, and formed a means of getting from the bridge deck to the poop without forcing a man to pass down the companion and go along the well-deck itself.

Orville was about to attempt the path of the derricks. He knew that should he creep aft along the well-deck those under the poop would be almost sure to see him as he would be on a level with their eyes. But if he could only get along on one of the derrick booms he might stand a chance of reaching the poop deck unobserved, unless some of the mutineers happened to be keeping a watch from there also. Then too, were he discovered from the deck to be creeping along the boom, he would not be in such a vulnerable position for knives, for the great curve of the two-foot-diameter spar would serve to shelter him.

He crawled out on the boom that lay on the starboard side of the bridge deck and whispered to Mackenzie to take the port one. The lean Scotchman was not an adept climber any more than Orville, both men being long past their youthful suppleness, and the chief had some difficulty in sticking to his precarious seat. But he was game to try anything once.

To work a way along a boom, perfectly smooth and some six or seven feet round, on a dark night, with the thought that knives might any moment come whizzing by, is no pleasant task. Several times Mackenzie almost fell off, twice through grabbing at his spanner, which kept threatening to fall out of his hip pocket despite its buttoned-up condition. Orville on such nerve-racking occasions lay perfectly still and cursed softly and fluently in half a dozen languages until the chief had recovered his balance and was ready to resume, somewhat ruffled as to temper and dignity.

But the farther he went the more adept the chief seemed to become at derrick-crawling. By the time the two men reached the main-mast and were preparing to leave one boom at the gooseneck and start off again at the gooseneck of the other, crossing over the mast table, Mackenzie was a fairly reliable crawler and had ceased swearing so weirdly.

So far there had been no movement below from the poop alleyways to indicate that anything had been seen to arouse suspicions. No knives had come from the darkness and no sounds.

Orville began to believe that the chief and he would achieve their object in perfect safety. Had he known that the four men left to watch the well-deck were at that precise moment grinning evilly to themselves and pressing their ears against the wheel-house doors to listen to the conversation going on within, he might even have ventured to try the quicker and more open way of getting aft along the deck itself.

As it was, the chief and he reached the poop in safety and without being seen. They clambered quietly from their booms to the poop deck with the aid of the great wire stay; and, slipping at once into the utter darkness beneath the low reels of hawser wire, they crouched perfectly still.

For perhaps five minutes neither man moved or even dared to breathe above a faint sigh. And then, as their hearts stilled a little and nothing happened, they concluded they were safe from discovery for the time being. A low hum of voices came from the wheel-house below them, but they could not distinguish words.

Orville poked his head above the particular wire reel he happened to be under and took a cautious look around. So far as he could see the poop itself was deserted. But of course he could not be sure, what with the shadows from the lifeboats and the deck cargo of fresh vegetables in the very centre of the deck, near a lifebelt chest and a fire-bucket rack.

Still, the chance would have to be taken. They had come so far that they must risk a lot more to make the coming worth while.

"Hang on to my shirt tail," whispered Orville tensely.

"Ah'm coomin'," the chief sent back; and the next moment he was, a lean, dark figure crawling on all fours and holding now his precious spanner in his sound right hand. Orville chuckled and set off aft, on all fours himself, with the utmost caution and keeping a sharp lookout.

'Midships, near the dark pile of the deck cargo, he passed by one of those little, low, mushroom ventilators, used to keep the air more or less pure when the larger and more cumbersome ventilators are apt to be in the way. Crawling on all fours as he was, Orville's ear was just above the round top of the mushroom, and he could plainly hear what was going on below. He motioned to the chief behind him to stop for a moment while he listened.

"You disfigured me for life by interfering between that little swine of a skipper and myself, and soon I'm going to get even," Orville heard.

The voice was Slim Walker's. But whom was he talking to? The little millionaire listened intently for a few moments and then caught, "Good for Brown!" in Peterson's voice.

Excitedly Orville turned on the chief and gripped his arm.

"Peterson's alive yet. They've got him down there, and that Walker swine is going to do something to him. Haven't got the drift of it yet. But c'm 'long; we can't waste time listening. That boy needs me badly, I've a hunch; and I'm going."

"Lead on, sorr," whispered Mackenzie dryly. "Ye're wastin' time talkin'."

With a snort Orville left the mushroom ventilator and continued aft on his hands and knees. He was fairly certain now that the poop itself was deserted, for during all the passage from the boom-heads to the shadows of the lifeboats he did not see one single thing to lead him to believe otherwise, nor hear one single sound.

He concluded that as Peterson was prisoner below all the mutineers were listening to Walker speaking to him. Doubtless it was concluded by them that the helmsman and the steward were enough to keep him, Orville, busy.

The little millionaire paused right at the edge of the poop deck aft, where the iron fair-lead for the deep-sea sounding-wire raised itself. He lay flat on his stomach and peered over the wide beading to the deck below. The white glow from the stern light dazzled him for a moment, and he shifted his position and shaded his eyes with his hands.

He noticed that the *Ionia* had lost way with the desertion of the engine-room. Yet the mutineers must have left some one at the donkey boiler because the dynamos were running. If they were not, if there was no steam kept up, the lights would fail.

Orville was, of course, correct in this assumption. Slim Walker, not wishing the light to go out unless it was absolutely necessary that they should do so to enable him to carry out his plans, had ordered two of the firemen to keep steam up in the donkey boiler.

They did not care for the task, but Slim Walker was not to be denied. He promised to have them relieved as soon as possible. He would have made use of hurricane lamps but for the fact that all the oil happened to be in the locked forepeak—locked at least when he had last looked.

Another thing: Steam was needed to pump fresh water from the tanks below to the deck-tank and for other such tasks, such as cooking. Walker was looking just far enough ahead to remember that he would need the engines and plenty of steam as soon as the *Ionia* was completely his.

* * *

ORVILLE could hear no one on the deck below the poop from where he was peering, nor could he even hear the hum of conversation from the wheel-house; the sigh of the breathing sea prevented that. With a whispered word of caution to the chief, the little millionaire slipped over the edge of the deck, hung with hands on the beading, swung himself inboard and let go.

There was not more than four feet of deck between the after rounded end of the wheel-house and the rail, and Orville very nearly smashed into the steel bulkhead. He checked himself as he landed on his toes by holding off with his hands, and straightened up at last without having made very much noise. He listened for a while and then crept round the house to the starboard side.

His heart almost stopped beating when he saw outlined against the stars in the oblong shaped opening for'ard of the alleyway the heads and shoulders of two men. They were bent inward, listening at the wheel-house door, and Orville breathed easily once again as he understood their actions.

He crept back and round to the port side of the deck and saw the two other watchmen occupied in the same listening attitude. Apparently there were only four men under the poop in the alleyways on watch. The thing he had in mind should be easy. He returned to the rail aft and called very softly to the Scotchman.

The chief dropped inboard all of a scrambling heap and Orville kicked him savagely to stop him from swearing. The twelve-inch shifting-spanner clinked against the deck and Orville swore himself then. For several minutes both men remained motionless. But the watchmen were too much interested to hear anything save the conversation inside the house, and the sigh of the sea obscured all minor sounds.

"We'll take the starboard side first. We'll have to act quick and snappy and quiet if possible. Is that clear?" Orville whispered. "There's two men each side of the poop and they're listening to what's being said inside the house. Savvy?"

"Lead on, sorr," Mackenzie grunted with a low rasp in his voice, taking a better grip on his spanner.

"Shut up!" Orville snarled and then went ahead, treading lightly as a ghost round the curve of the house and upon the listening watchmen.

The thing was really absurdly simple, the surprize complete. The great coils of eight-inch hawser lying in the alleyways gave ample cover, and there was one big coil right opposite the door at which the men were standing. Peterson not having had time that day to get the stuff put below as Orville had instructed him.

The men were standing too in a position very awkward for sudden defense. Their ears were flat against the door and their hips distorted out of shape. They dared not open the door a bit to listen. Slim Walker had pointed out that it was not certain that Orville and Mackenzie had been disposed of yet, and the slightest light on the poop alleyways would give them a chance to shoot straight.

Not that Walker doubted that Orville was dead by that time. Surely two strong men could manage a little individual like the skipper. But still, Walker had ordained no light in the alleyways when he had laid his trap for Peterson and McKellip and he let the ruling still run. And so it was that the curious watchers had to be content with a closed door and muffled words.

Orville stepped suddenly from the shelter of the rope coil near by and hit one man under the ear with the butt of his automatic. The man's head thudded against the door, but the noise inside prevented the sound from being clearly heard. He dropped like a log.

The other man straightened and turned and opened his mouth to utter a cry of astonishment. Also he reached swiftly for the ugly knife he wore in his belt. But Mackenzie reached for him with his spanner as a lazy, good-natured bear reaches for some honey, and the man dropped mute beside his companion.

Orville bound the two of them with their own belts and with the lines attached to two cork fenders he found inside the rope coils. Then he gagged them with strips torn from their own singlets.

"Next side," he grunted briefly and crept round the poop again.

Mackenzie followed him closely, and the two of them worked along toward the other watchers, who, all unconscious of their approach, were in almost the same attitudes their shipmates on the starboard side had been.

The last rope coil near the door was somewhat farther aft than the one the other side had been, and a short run would be necessary to reach the intent victims. Orville was just tensing himself for it when a terrible scream rang out.

X

ONE moment the only sounds had been somewhat soothing to the ear—the lisp of the light wind in the scanty steamship rigging, the sigh of the lifting and falling sea and the occasionally heard hum of voices from within the wheel-house. Next moment the night was shattered with fearful cries of mortal agony.

The shrieks throbbed and echoed all over the ship. They were not separate. Each was a continuation of the last, vibrant with pain, rising and falling in equal cadences, seeming to split the throat that uttered them.

The two listeners by the door shot suddenly upright and gazed, startled, along the deck. Orville and the chief rose cautiously in the gloom and peered in the same direction, their nerves a little shaken at the interruption.

Then from out of the port alleyway under the bridge deck there burst a weird figure, naked and gleaming ghostlike in the starlight. It was the figure of a squat, ungainly man with black, unshaven cheeks and vivid, dark eyes that actually seemed to glow.

Foam flecked the man's lips and chin and shoulders. He waved grotesque monster arms, white and shapeless with bandages. And he ran straight for the alleyway in which the four men, two of whom were unaware of the others' presence, stood close to each other and stared wide-eyed.

"My God, the cook!" muttered Orville. "Burnt his hands. Guess he's in ——"

The two mutineers had no knowledge of the cook's drunken folly. Other fierce, swift, moving events had driven the matter from the minds of those who did know, and they had not spread what in the ordinary course of a voyage would have been a subject for conversation for at least a week.

Thus it was that the two men, after one scared look, tore open the door of the wheel-house, forgetting instructions to the contrary, and with a frightened yell tumbled inside, throwing consternation into the men within, who were just anticipating Slim Walker's mallet meeting with its target.

When the door opened Orville and the chief caught one vivid glimpse of things and matters inside, saw Slim Walker taking his second smashing swing at Peterson and the mutineers standing round in a semi-circle. Then the door slammed shut again.

The insane, pain-racked cook tore aft into the alley. He could not open the doors of the wheel-house of course, even had he wanted to, because of his bandaged hands; and he passed right round the poop, reached the rail aft, and instead of curving to his left and continuing his mad run down the starboard well-deck, shot straight overboard.

The chief started up with the intention of going aft, but Orville gripped his arm.

"Sit down, you mad Scotchman. It's no use. He's crazy. He'll sink like a stone. 'Sides, how can we get a boat out as things are?"

" 'Tis true, sorr; 'tis true," muttered the chief after a moment's reflection and thought, and shook his head mournfully.

He relaxed, and Orville dropped his arm. There was a sudden silence in the wheel-house, and then the door opened cautiously. Slim Walker's voice could be heard through the narrow opening.

"Scared of something the skipper's trying to pull, I'll bet. That's if that blamed steward didn't finish him. Ghosts? That be —— for a tale. I'll go and see."

Then the bandaged face of the man himself appeared round the door edge as it opened wider, and he stepped out on the deck with the whole body of mutineers crowding after him, all looking somewhat scared.

" 'P'raps it was Brown you saw, or McKellip," suggested a quavering voice.

Slim Walker turned on the speaker with a snarl.

"Ghosts nothing! Turn out that —— light!"

The light was hastily switched off by some one. Orville and the chief crouched low behind their rope coil and escaped being seen. Indeed, no eyes were turned in their direction. The two very much frightened watchmen were pointing in the direction of the bridge deck, from the base of which they declared they had seen a screaming white apparition emerge and race upon them.

All eyes were turned in that direction. Several men began looking over their shoulders. Slim Walker, after a look fore and aft and anxious to get back to Peterson, spoke sharply.

"You're dreaming. Or you've both been drinking. There's nothing to be heard now, and nothing to be seen. Stay here and keep a lookout. Perhaps a couple more of you might as well stay out here too, in case the 'ghosts' shows up again. Call me if he does."

There was a grumble of protest from the watchmen, but Walker silenced it with a snarl. Then he returned into the wheel-house with his calking-mallet, leaving four men, all of them a little apprehensive, outside the door. Just as the door shut and the lights were switched on again, Orville heard Walker exclaim:

"Why haven't Tony and Roderiz been in shouting about ghosts? See if they've seen anything, Harry."

Orville guessed that Tony and Roderiz were the two watchmen lying bound and gagged and unconscious in the starboard alley. He chuckled a bit and, rising, slipped forward. The chief spat on his sound right hand, gripped his spanner tightly and followed him.

The four watchmen could not see very well, their eyes as yet not being accustomed to the dark after the light of the wheel-house. And they were too busy talking among themselves to hear Orville and the chief approach. The two men who had been on watch before were very intent on insisting it was a ghost they saw and nothing else. Wherefore terror paralyzed all four when the attack was made.

Orville clubbed one with his automatic butt and the chief did likewise with his spanner before the other two were fully aware what was taking place. Orville's foot caught one of the remaining men in the stomach and sent him sprawling, while he hit the other between the eyes with his fist, and followed the blow up with a rap from the gun butt.

The chief fell on the man who had been sent sprawling and spannered him into quietness. Orville brushed down his coat and chuckled as he surveyed the four huddled forms.

"Scum, chief, every man Jack of them. Le's go inside. Peterson's in a fix."

"As ye say, sorr."

ORVILLE salved his second automatic from his hip pocket and, a gun in each hand, approached the wheel-house door. At a nod from him Mackenzie flung it back with a crash, and the little millionaire stepped over the storm-step and took three short paces inside.

"Put 'em up!" he snapped crisply, and there was no mistaking his meaning.

He was blinking a little with the light in his eyes, but he could see well enough to shoot should necessity arise. Apparent it was not going to. Slim Walker, starti at the voice behind him, missed his third swing with his calking-mallet and hit the bulkhead with a thudding boom of steel as Peterson ducked.

Harry, the man with the violet eyes, who had slipped hastily outside the starboard door to see what had become of the two watchmen and had thus not been present holding the yellow-haired giant's head, started to come in from the deck again as Orville covered all hands. He remained in the doorway, paralyzed, choking with the news on his lips that the two watchmen were bound and gagged.

Slim Walker turned slowly; every man's hands went slowly above his head. Their jaws dropped while the look of gleeful anticipation they had worn over the conflict between Walker and Peterson faded rapidly.

Walker knew who had spoken even before he turned. His face went white with fear, and his eyes glittered with baffled rage.

Peterson managed a grin as soon as the first shock of his astonishment had worn off.

"Hello," he said feebly.

"Put 'em up. You, Walker!" Orville snarled, his keen eyes racing back and forth from one man to the other, taking in every movement, every expression on every face.

With a cry of passion Slim Walker swung up his mallet and dashed for Peterson with the intention of carrying out his threat on the man who had wrecked his features and his idols. Orville's lips tightened. He shot twice, once from each gun.

Walker stopped short with a look of intense surprize. He uttered a gurgling cry and then crumpled suddenly at the knees, his mallet falling with a dull thud to the deck.

"That wasn't your blasted wrist," said Orville with a touch of humor, grim humor at that.

The man with the violet eyes, still half in and half out the doorway, leaned slightly forward. He gaped and shot a look of fear at the little millionaire. Slim Walker had a neat hole above each eye.

"Come in! You at the door!"

Without a word Harry entered the wheel-house, letting the door swing from him, and raised his hands above his head.

"Mr. Mackenzie, will you cut Mr. Peterson's lashings?"

"Ah will tha'," rasped the chief, and he made his way to the port bulkhead and deftly plucked a knife from the belt of one of the seamen near by and cut the seizings that held the yellow-haired giant helpless. He hummed a hymn the while he worked.

Peterson struggled to his feet with the chief's aid and massaged his numb wrists. He found he could not walk very well just yet, so he remained breathless from relief and the pain of returning circulation, leaning against the bulkhead.

"Will you now, Mr. Mackenzie, take one of these guns and cover these men?"

Orville handed one automatic to the chief. Then he walked across to Peterson and handed him the other.

"Here, take this," he grunted.

The mate nodded and turned his blue eyes on the scowling faces of the scared mutineers.

Orville jog-trotted aft to the rope stretched across the wheel-house and removed what light line he could find there, some boat-lacing, log-line, two short heaving-lines and some tape that had come off of old lifebelts. He cut it all into lengths and then proceeded to bind every one of the mutineers hand and foot.

By the time all those in the wheel-house had been secured the four watchmen outside on the port deck showed signs of recovering. Orville promptly secured them too, and then had all the helpless forms dragged by Peterson into rows near the steam gear.

The mutineers' faces were pictures of despair and wonder. They did not understand how they had come to be trapped. They had told off two men, the steward and the helmsman, each of whom was physically a powerful man, to catch the captain unaware and dispose of him. The task had looked easy.

Everything presumably had been planned to the last detail. Slim Walker had assured them it had anyway. And now he lay dead on the greasy floor while his shipmates were helpless and tied beside him. And anyway how had the captain and the chief engineer managed to get aft past the watchmen?

Orville brushed off his clothes again, snorted, breathed hard on his wisp of mustache, and, pulling a somewhat crumpled cigar from his pocket, proceeded to light it with care. He puffed for a while and then glared at his captives.

"You swine'll get what's coming to you," he snarled. "I warned you, and I tried to treat you like human beings so far as you'd let me. From now on you'll know what —— is, for you've killed my mates. Is that clear?"

He caught sight of Slim Walker's body lying on the deck in the grease and filth; and, taking the automatic from Peterson's hand, he nodded toward the open door.

"Take that carrion out and pitch it overboard!"

"But ye'll surely gie th' mon a fair burrial?" the chief said, a little horrified.

"I've been too —— soft-hearted on this packet. I gave the last two swine a burial. Pitch him over, Peterson. I'll curse his ghost if it comes back to haunt me. His body's legitimate shark-food. Make it snappy now!"

Without a word Peterson bent and caught the limp body by the slack of the shirt; and, carrying it as he might have carried a Gladstone bag, he staggered out of the wheel-house with it, still being a little shaky on his legs. He pitched the body overboard with one heave and with little regret, remembering the calking-mallet, having to walk to the beginning of the well-deck to get clear of the rope coils.

As he turned to reenter the wheel-house three figures came toward him from the shadows round the bridge deck. Hastily the giant mate slipped to cover until he saw who they were and that they were unarmed, and then he rose and masterfully led them, very much astonished and cowed, into the presence of Orville.

The little millionaire, standing with arms akimbo in the very midst of his prostrate captives, his cigar sticking up arrogantly from the corner of his mouth, his clear gray eyes gleaming, snorted as he saw the three newcomers.

"Hello, who's this?" he grunted.

He recognized the carpenter, the steward and the helmsman, the last two very much disfigured with bruises and very scared.

He promptly knocked down the two latter and tied them hand and foot. They were too much taken aback at the sight of their shipmates similarly bound to protest even if that would have been any good.

They had picked themselves up—from the bridge in the case of the helmsman, and the cabin of Orville in the case of the steward—and conferred together after finding no trace of the fiery little captain. And they had decided to go aft and report to the gathered mutineers that Orville had disappeared.

On the way they had met the carpenter, very much upset by what was going on and mortally afraid that if the mutineers did not succeed he would be held by the authorities as their accomplice. Outwardly of course, when in the mutineers' presence he always professed sympathy for their cause.

Orville swung round on the gray-bearded old man after he had finished tying the other two, and the carpenter backed away apprehensively.

"I told you, sir, I wasn't holding with them—" he commenced quaveringly.

"That's all right, carpenter. I just wanted to tell you you can lock the forepeak again and keep it locked. I sha'n't need to have the crew drinking whisky now."

Mackenzie could be plainly heard sighing with relief. The whisky was saved.

"I understand you're an old sailor," went on the little millionaire after a brief pause.

"Forty years, sir, man and boy," mumbled the carpenter a little proudly.

"Huh! Good. You take the second mate's berth till we get to Sydney. Get your dunnage 'midships tonight."

"Second—second mate's berth, sir?"

The old man could scarcely believe his ears. He had had dreams once of being an officer, but had long since given them up.

"Yes, second mate. Is that clear? Run along and get settled. Peterson, I think we've every man aboard now except one or two in the stokehole. We'll get them later. The cook's dead; Walker's dead; seems 'most every one of consequence is dead. Every man here is tied up securely, and even if they do get loose they can't get out once both doors are locked. Turn out the lights and see all fast. Savvy?"

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the mate a little wearily, running his hand over his eyes.

He had not thought the strain of the past hour or so would have told on him so much. He gritted his teeth and forced his brain to stop whirling.

"Le's go, chief," Orville grunted, turning and passing out on deck. "My ——, but I'm thirsty! This climate never did agree with me. C'm 'long and drink."

"Ah'm a hearty concord wi' th' worrds, sorr," rasped the chief as he strode along and slipped his beloved spanner into his hip-pocket.

Peterson was left to lock up the wheelhouse and to turn out the lights on fifteen sullen and badly apprehensive men.

WHEN Orville reached his cabin he kicked aside the broken glass from the bottle the steward had tried to stun him with and rummaged in the locker for the whisky and some glasses. The chief dropped heavily to a chair and regarded the little man thoughtfully.

"Ye're a wonnerful mon, sorr," he said at last, twisting his flaming mustache. "We've had a mutiny and a suppression, so t' speak, sin' leavin' Apia. An' we win in th' en'. Ah'm thinkin' ye mus' be summin' more an ordinarry ship-master, if ye'll fergie ma sayin' so."

"I am. I'm Seth Orville," Orville said testily. "Any one in Samoa will tell you who I am."

He poured out drinks with some haste.

"But that doesn't matter. Listen, chief—here's your glass; good luck—I own a few ships m'self; savvy? I had a drunken skipper of mine tell me I was no —— good. Said I was one of the regular soaks, old and feeble-minded and only fit to sit in Apia and guzzle whisky. I felt it was up to me, understand? I knew I could do anything the young 'uns could.

"I had a chance to get the *Ionia*. I paid thirty thousand quid for the old tub, not for her so much as for the crew. I had to prove to m'self I hadn't gone back. I'm satisfied. Is that clear?"

"Ye're a mon wi' an arteestic temperement, sorr. Ah ha' a respec' for ye Ah ne'er had f' any mon yet. Tha's not so since Ah sailed un'er Bobby McTavish. Losh, he was a mon! We made a voyage t'——"

"'Lo, Peterson. Sit down, man, and rest. You look kinda white about the gills. Everything in order?"

"Everything, sir. I locked the fiddley and the engine-room doors and clapped down the skylights. The men below in the stokehole will have to wait till you let them out 'fore they can get on deck. The carpenter said he'd dropped the bunker hatches on and battened down."

"Good! Narrow squeak for you tonight, Peterson."

"Aye, sir; I thought for a while I was a gone coon."

"—— it, you deserved to be. You make me sick. Just like a blasted kid who doesn't know a deck-traveler from a back-stay. You dash right into as pretty a trap as ever I saw. Didn't I shout to you to come back? Huh!

"Listen, chief, you spannery Scotchman. He says to me the first day aboard this tub when I found him stowed away in the wheelhouse, 'You're too fragile and liable to blow up to be trusted near fire.' Huh!

"He came along on the *Ionia* to look after *me*. Is that clear? And I've had more grief and trouble looking after *him* than I ever had before. You yellow-haired pup, what do you say?"

"Rub it in, sir; rub it in! I hand the biscuit to you. You can take care of yourself. I'll never cross your word again. I'm a back number, a —— fool and a bloomin' greenhorn," Peterson sighed.

"You are that; you are that. Yes, sir, you are. And what's more, you're old and feeble-minded, and all you're good for is to stay in Apia and guzzle whisky. Is that clear?

"They called me a —— old fool and a useless old fool; but I'll buck any game the young 'uns plays and win out too."

"Aye, aye, ye c'd do that," muttered the chief, who had been an interested and cynical listener all the while. "Any game b' women. 'Tis there ye'd feel th' han' o' Time, sorr. Th' women 'tis as wan's the youn' an' fresh face. They gie their hearts f' a bull neck an' a pair o' braw shoul'ers. An' a mon o' expeerience has no chance."

Orville shot a quick look at the Scotchman and then abruptly refilled his glass and Peterson's, and last his own.

"Drink up," he grunted. "I didn't know you were ever in love, chief."

"Ah was, Ah was," sighed Mackenzie vastly. "Bu' a young lad fra' Edinburr, scarce out o' his mo'er's lap, took her.

"Weel, her's t' yere best heal', sorr. T' ye, Mr. Peterson."

He drank slowly and with a look of indescribable sadness in his slate-colored eyes. Peterson drank to him courteously and then, feeling better, stood up from the chair he had flopped into. Orville drained his glass at a gulp and set it on the table with a bang.

"Now to get the old tub to Sydney," he said, glaring from one man to the other.

The carpenter poked his head round the door just then, after a preliminary rap.

"Did you say the second mate's room, sir?"

"What the —— did you think I said, my own?"

"No sir; but I wondered——"

"Whether you should sleep there? Sure. Take the second mate's room as your own. You can turn in when you like. We sha'n't need you tonight. But say, did you get the bunker hatch battened down?"

"Yes, sir. No one can get from below now that way."

"That's great. Good night."

"Good night, sir."

"Good man, that, Peterson. Forty years before the mast. Ought to know something."

Peterson grunted and yawned and then caressed his damaged face where Slim Walker's shoe had struck it. Orville went on:

"Guess we'll have to do without engines for a bit, chief. You can get your two precious men out of the stokehole in the morning. I expect they'll stop firing up as soon as they find out they've been locked in and no relief comes, but I doubt not we shan't need the light then.

"Peterson, you and I'll take watch-and-watch on the bridge. The carpenter must act as a day officer. He can do odd jobs about the deck and steer a bit. We'll have to all take tricks for a day or so. Is that clear?"

"You're going to keep the gang aft locked up and tied?" inquired the yellow-haired giant with a show of interest.

"I am. I'm not taking any more chances of losing——"

"What! Are you actually afraid of losing your ship or your life?"

Peterson laughed with a tinge of glee. He was high-strung enough just then to be amused at trifles.

"Afraid of nothing!" Orville snorted and glared and chewed hard on his cigar. "I was going to say when you interrupted me that I wasn't going to take any more chances of losing *you*. What'd I say to Allie if you got hurt? Huh?"

"Oh!"

Peterson's face lost its grin. He wouldn't care for Allie, Orville's pretty niece, to hear of this humiliation. He turned a little sulky. He might have been a complete failure as a defender of weak little men, but there was no need of always rubbing it in. Mackenzie rose after a while and yawned.

"Ah 've a notion t' turn in," he said. "Ye won' f'gie ma three d'd mon, ma engineers in the stokehole?"

"Go ahead, chief. Leave everything to us. We'll have to bury your engineers when we get time. But I'm —— if I know how you can sleep after all that's happened tonight."

"So, so. Weel, goo' ni'."

"Good night."

"Good night, sir."

The dour engineer left the cabin slowly and made his way, head bent, to his own room, muttering to himself the while:

"Aye, 'tis the braw shoul'ers an' th' stron' neck they cry f'. No' f' any mon o' expeerience."

In his cabin the first thing he did was to lay his spanner down handy on his writing-desk, near his bunk. Then he fished a somewhat faded photograph from his inside pocket and brushed it with his mustache, as if ashamed to kiss it for fear some one might be watching. He set it up against a couple of books laid flat on the desk.

Then he got out a bottle of whisky and a glass and a small bowl of sugar, and, lighting his pipe, sat down before the photograph and gazed at it for a long time, his lips moving as if in silent prayer when he was not drinking or blowing clouds of evil-smelling smoke toward the deck-head.

ORVILLE turned to Peterson as soon as the chief had disappeared.

"We'll get the staysails up in the morning," he said testily. "I suppose the tub carried them for emergencies. Did you see any in the forepeak?"

"Sure, she's got a couple of sets. What are you going to do—try and make Suva?"

"Suva, ——! I've got a cargo here to be delivered in Sydney within a specified time. What would I want to be doing in Suva?"

"Oh, I thought perhaps you could get the crew put in jail and get another crew there."

"That's the blasted trouble with you; you think too much, but never of anything reasonable. Has it occurred to you that if I get jammed up with the authorities I'm liable to be held as witness in a murder trial; so are you for that matter? And the British Government is an excellent institution, but like all Governments it's too —— long-winded to suit me. It might be two or three months before I could get away."

"Well, you could ship the cargo on some other vessel," returned Peterson, slightly nettled.

"I could, could I?" Orville snarled and blared. "I said when I left Apia I'd deliver this cargo myself and without aid. The crew I'm landing somewhere—I'll think of a place presently—where they won't be able to get away till I send a cruiser for them. We're going to sail first, though, to a little island I've already got in mind and pick up a new crew there, a crew of Kanakas. Is that clear?"

"I suppose the idea's all right. I've never seen Kanakas used in a stokehole yet. Are they any good?"

"A —— sight better'n some white men I know of. They will be anyway when Mackenzie gets them in hand."

"I suppose so."

"Well, that's all. You might as well make up your mind to rough it a bit till we reach Good Hope Island. If you think of kicking just remember, m' son, you ought to be in the Hebrides now instead of on this packet with me. This's what you get for disobeying orders."

"Where's Good Hope Island? Never heard of it."

"There's a whole lot you've never heard of. Le's go and look at the chart."

Orville led the way to the chart-house and switched on the lights. He spread a chart of the lower half of the South Pacific on the bench made for the purpose and pricked off the *Ionia's* approximate position on it, getting his distance from the detail chart of the Samoan group he had been using for navigation purposes since the ship left Apia. Then he ran his pencil from the tiny dot on the big chart that represented the *Ionia* to a little island to the northwest of it.

Peterson, bending over the little millionaire's shoulder, read, "Niuafou," and in brackets underneath the name: "Good Hope Island. Inhabited." Orville grunted.

"Knew the place was somewhere hereabouts. I did the big chief there a service some years back—quite a while, come to think of it. If he hasn't forgotten me I'll collect on that good turn. He'll let me have a couple of dozen or so of stout young men."

"How far is the place?"

"You can see, can't you? About fifty miles."

Peterson picked up a pair of compasses and adjusted them with care. He spanned the distance between the *Ionia* and Good Hope Island and then whistled as well as his split lips would allow.

"About a degree," he muttered, laying aside the compasses.

"Take us nearly a day with any luck, and if the sails are not too moldy and torn. Now see this place here, about one degree from the island?"

Orville jabbed at the chart with bony forefinger.

"Name of Zephyr Reef," he went on. "Lies west-southwest of Good Hope Island. I'm going to maroon the crew there till I get ready to attest against them in court."

Peterson bent over the chart and frowned.

"But the reef's marked, 'Said to be submerged,' " he observed.

Orville chuckled and grinned.

"I know. So far as the guys know who make up these charts that reef is awash. If I told all I knew there'd be quite a change in the South Pacific charts. A lot of new islands would appear, and a whole lot would change their positions on paper. Is that clear? Well, I happen to know that Zephyr Reef is about a fathom above water at the highest of tides. It's part volcanic and part coral, and that's why it's above water now.

"When the chart guys got hold of their dope about it it was awash. But coral builds fast, and when coral started on the sandbanks round it a whole lot of junk started to drift in and formed earth.

"There's quite a few sea-birds there too. Some day some one's going to clean up on guano on that reef. At present there's nothing but a bunch of grass in the middle and a brackish sort of spring. But it'll do. I'll leave the crew there till I'm ready to have 'em hanged."

"Six feet above water, sir? Doesn't sound very high."

"Oh, shut up! You make me sick. Did you know there are dozens of atolls, inhabited at that, only two feet above high water? You've a —— of a lot to learn.

"Anyway Zephyr Reef's safe for the crew, unless heavy weather breaks and I don't think it will. Well, that's that. We can't set a course until morning, when we get the sails up. The next thing to do is to bury McKellip."

"That's so. I'd well-nigh forgotten poor McKellip. Shall I get some canvas up from the forepeak?"

"Do. About three fathom'll be enough. Too much in fact; this trip's costing me a small fortune in canvas. We'll have to get those three dead engineers on deck tomorrow and bury 'em. Hope no one else gets shot. Not that I mind so much, but we can't spare the canvas.

"You'll have to get the key from the carpenter. He's in the second mate's room. Fetch a couple of needles and palms and some twine. I'll give you a hand."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Peterson went to turn away when the lights went out abruptly. The dynamoes had stopped purring in the engine-room; evidently the two firemen left below had found out their predicament and had decided it was foolish for them to work. Or perhaps they were so busy trying to get out of their hot though roomy prison that they had unintentionally let steam fall.

Orville shrugged in the sudden darkness as he turned off mechanically the now useless switches. He closed the chart-house door and snorted.

"Better bring a couple of hurricane lamps and a can of oil when you come with the canvas," he called after the giant mate, who had paused at the head of the companion with the abrupt cessation of light.

"All right, sir," Peterson said as he descended the companion and made his way in the direction of the fo'csle and forepeak, empty and desolate in the darkness that wrapped them close.

Orville grunted as he heard a clanging below him from the direction of the fiddley. The imprisoned firemen were frantically hammering at the steel doors and trying to get out. The little millionaire chuckled as he lit a fresh cigar and with a sudden thought striking him returned into the chart-house and brought on deck the four spare navigation lights, one white for the masthead, one white for the stern, one red for the port bridge wing and the other green for the starboard. They were already trimmed and filled with oil as they were supposed to be, and he lit them carefully and slid the red and the green into place in the racks outside the bridge wing, the electric navigation lights of course going out when the dynamos stopped.

Then he went aft and fixed the stern light in place and, returning for'ard, hoisted the mast-head light to the truck by way of the signal halyards that came out to the sheerpole. His task completed, the *Ionia* safe from chance collision in the event of there being a vessel in those waters, he returned to his cabin to await Peterson.

XI

THE task of sewing up the dead McKellip was somewhat gruesome. The two men had only a desire to get it over with as soon as possible. When Peterson returned from the forepeak with the necessary materials Orville grabbed his whisky-bottle and accompanied the giant mate aft to number three hatch.

They lifted the body on top of the hatch, rolled it in the canvas and proceeded to sew it up with big, strong stitches. For light they had the two hurricane lamps Peterson had brought along; and the steady yellow light gave the scene a creepy appearance, with the bloody, rigid corpse, the stained canvas, the white clothes of the living, the whisky-bottle glittering and constantly being lifted, and the great sea sighing all around.

But the task was at last finished; and, carrying the shapeless, long bundle to the rail, weighted with lumps of coal salved from the little galley bunker, the two men held a brief service, Orville reading in a querulous, hushed voice from his service book. Then Peterson dropped the Yankee overboard; and with Orville he gazed over the rail, filled with sad thoughts. McKellip had been likable. As Orville had said of him when introducing him to Peterson, he was "Yankee, tough, profane, capable." Now he was gone, forever.

He sank eddying into the phosphorescent warm sea just as the moon peered golden above the sea-rim and lit the gentle wind-ruffled swells with warm light. He sank down and down until even the phosphorescent swirls ceased to wrap him, and he drifted in greater, colder depths where only the great squid lurked and the most terrible storms became only whispers from afar.

"You go and turn in, Peterson. I'll keep watch till dawn," said Orville, turning from the rail with a sigh.

He made for the whisky-bottle on the hatch and took another drink. Peterson grunted and with a curt "Good night" went up the companion from the well-deck to the bridge deck and so to his room. The little millionaire followed him a few minutes later, laden with twine and palms and needles and the short piece of canvas left, the whisky-bottle bulging his hip.

But for him there was no sleep. He prowled restlessly about for the rest of the night, smoking, drinking, thinking, making trips aft now and then to see that his captives were all right.

With the first flush of dawn he woke Peterson from a troubled sleep and had him on deck.

"We'll get the stays'ls up," he grunted. "There's a fair wind from the south that's favorable, and it shows promise of freshening."

Peterson swore a little and yawned. He was still tired, his short sleep not having done his aching, bruised body very much good. He thought that a cup of coffee would freshen him up, but then remembered that there was no steward nor any cook to attend to him.

He had no relish to start a galley fire himself. So he grimaced and helped himself to Orville's whisky and then went below to the saloon pantry to rummage for biscuits and canned tongue and milk, off which to breakfast. When he felt full he went out on to the fore well-deck with the carpenter, who had breakfasted in the same pantry some time before.

Orville ate nothing, but merely opened a fresh bottle of whisky. That was breakfast enough for him.

The carpenter unlocked the iron hatch of the forepeak and lifted it on its hinges, hooking it back to the bulkhead behind it in the very bows of the *Ionia*. There was a shackle made fast through a hole in the deck-beam, immediately above the hatch, and to this a tail-block was made fast and a length of stout two-and-three-quarter rope rove off over the single heavy sheave and one end dropped down into the peak.

Orville skipped below and lit a hurricane lamp and by its light managed to drag the end of one of the huge stays'ls to the coaming of the hatch. He made fast the line and signaled to heave away, and the tail-block creaked as the two men above took the strain.

There are few things harder than lifting canvas with insufficient man-power, and but for Peterson's extraordinary strength the task of getting the stays'ls out of the forepeak and on to the fore well-deck would have taken perhaps all day. As it was they were dragged clear of the fo'csle alleyway under two hours, though the actual hoisting and rigging took all morning, for there was quite a bit of patching to be done before the triangular pieces of canvas were in any way fit to be hoisted.

Also the awnings had to be removed from the fo'csle head, and a man had to go aloft and rig the halyards. But the job was accomplished at last, and from the fore and main masts of the tramp steamer *Ionia* two great sails, one at each mast, stained and long disused, fluttered with a promise of potential power.

The carpenter took the first trick at the wheel, and he brought the ship slowly round, depending a lot on the swell, until at last the wind bellied the canvas and the *Ionia* moved slowly toward the northwest.

Orville went to work out a course for steering, while Peterson had the not altogether pleasant task of finding enough corned beef and biscuits and fresh water with which to feed the prisoners aft and also the two frightened men in the stokehole.

He fed those aft first, carrying his supplies into the wheel-house in one of the rope-edged ash-bags and spreading them on the floor. Then he untied the two mildest-looking men he could see and ordered them to feed the rest. He sat on an upturned fire-bucket while they did so and nursed an automatic across his knee, deaf to the many anxious queries as to what was going to be done to the mutineers by the "old man."

The man with the violet eyes was especially insistent. He had had a most uncomfortable night in his bonds and was deadly afraid that he was due for hanging. Also, like most of his fellows, he had been unable to sleep and had had many monotonous hours of thinking over what had happened.

"Ain't yer any idea what the skipper's going t' do?" he pleaded. "You know, sir, we didn't want to buck him. Slim Walker, he was a bad 'un, and we was all scared of him. I didn't want t' 'old your head 'tween my knees while he swiped you; I swear I didn't. You know——"

"Oh, shut up," Peterson said wearily. "I'll crack the next man that speaks, with this gun. Get on and eat; I want to get out of here."

Mackenzie looked into the wheel-house a few minutes later and took in the huddle of sitting bound men with champing jaws and uneasy eyes, two of their number, their arms unbound, slipping pieces of biscuit and beef into open lips and lifting occasionally on demand a pannikin of water to those who desired. The chief grinned reflectively, curling his flaming mustache. Peterson looked up and grinned in return.

"'Lo, chief," he said. "Fine morning. What does this bunch look like?"

"Prretty, verra prretty. Losh, some o' them has awful bum's on their heads."

"Yeah. Orville's —— when he hits a man. And I guess some of those bumps came from your spanner too."

"A few, a few. Ha' ye fed the twa in ma stokehole?"

"No. I was goin' t' do that later."

"Ah'll fetch 'em aft. Tw'd b' better t' ha' all th' chiels t'gether."

"Think you can get them aft by yourself."

The chief grunted, and a glint appeared in his slaty-colored eyes. He reached round to his hip and pulled forth his twelve-inch shifting-spanner. Solemnly he waggled the head under Peterson's nose.

"Ah'll ha' 'em here 'n ten minutes; ye'll see. No less," he rasped.

Then he turned and made his way 'midships for the fiddley door, slipping his spanner back in his hip-pocket and feeling for the key. Peterson grunted and grinned and, lighting a cigaret, turned his attention once more to his feeding charges.

In less than ten minutes two coal-blackened, sweat-streaked firemen, looked very scared and tired and bruised, limped into the wheel-house and with a timid look at the giant mate sat down in front of the two men who were feeding the rest. Mackenzie lounged into the doorway a few seconds later. He was quite serious.

"Feed 'em, sorr," he grunted, pointing with his spanner to the two recent arrivals. "Feed 'em an' then tie 'em oop. Sh'd they gie trouble ca' me. Ah'm goin' for'ard t' see th' li'l mon."

Peterson nodded, and the chief disappeared. Half an hour later, his charges all fed, the two firemen tied up securely and the two feeders retied, Peterson went for'ard himself to join Orville, locking the wheel-house doors behind him, not without a shudder as he remembered what had occurred there only a few hours previously. Later Orville, the chief and he got the dead engineers from below by way of the ash-hoist, and, sewing them up, buried them after a short service.

FOR the next thirty-six hours the voyage of the *Ionia* was as monotonous as any voyage could well be. The wind blew steady and fair, hardly shifting one or two points in twenty-four hours, and the sea remained calm and warmly blue. Nothing untoward happened, and not a ship was sighted.

The three men of the deck took turn-and-turn-about at the wheel and the feeding of the prisoners, and Mackenzie spent most of the time tinkering about with his engines and gazing in private at a faded photograph that he wore next his dour Scotch heart in public.

But at last, in the morning of the second day after the sails had been hoisted, the low hills and then the beaches of Niuafou, or Good Hope Island, rose from the sea away on the starboard bow.

Orville took the wheel from the carpenter when the island lay perhaps three miles dead ahead, and he steered the *Ionia* to the anchorage, resurrecting forgotten memories of bearings from half-remembered landmarks. Peterson and the carpenter, with the aid of lever and sledge-hammer, managed to let the anchor go at the appointed time; and with her high stays'ls flapping in the wind and the blue water rustling under her stern the *Ionia* swung at last over a perfect sand bottom, lifting and falling slowly to the scend and surge of the swell that creamed in dazzling whiteness along the shore.

Orville hurried for'ard from the wheel so soon as he saw the *Ionia* lose way, and he aided in lowering the sail from the topstay. Then with the carpenter and Peterson he went aft and repeated the work on the other sail, after which all hands returned for'ard once again.

Canoes were already being run out on the beach from the palm fringe, and paddles gleamed in the brilliant sunlight. Bronzed young gods came swinging over the *Ionia's* bulwarks after a while and over her rails fore and aft, by way of the taut anchor cable, by way of the pilot ladder Orville had suspended 'midships for them, and even by way of the slack boat-rope hanging in bights from the sides for them to tie their canoes to.

A stalwart native with flashing white teeth, nearly as tall as Peterson, raised his hand courteously to the giant mate as he met the three white men near the windlass where they were jumping on the lowered fore stays'l and trying to compress it into the smallest possible space.

"*Manuia oe.*[*] The day is fair, white man. I am No'o, son of No'o the chief here, and he bids me give you welcome to Niuafou You are the chief of this great *afi?*"[†]

His laughing, dark eyes flashed as he flung the question and ran an admiring glance over the yellow-haired giant's physique.

Peterson smiled at him. He was naked to the waist but for a wreath of hisbiscus round his head, like a crown, and a long necklace of some tiny, white, sweet-smelling blossoms round his throat. On his right forearm he wore a single broad golden bangle as his only metal ornament. A pair of new duck pants, evidently put on for the occasion, encased his stalwart legs, his bare feet showing vividly dark from under the cuffs.

He was of fine physique himself and his muscles were of that smooth, slender quality that is so much more powerful and infinitely quicker in use than the muscles of knots and bulges and great size.

"No," said Peterson; "there is the captain and chief here."

He pointed to Orville, who was snorting and fuming at being overlooked by people he had declared owed him a great service.

"Wow!"

The native chief's son uttered the exclamation by way of astonishment as he looked at the till now unobserved Orville. It seemed but logic to the native mind that Peterson, a mighty man, should be master wherever he went. And he had said that the little, sun-dried creature, who was glaring so persistently and chewing so quickly at his cigar, was chief. But No'o was a gentleman, and he suppressed his astonishment, bending his head courteously.

"You come from *Fa'a?*"[‡]

"I do. Is your father alive?" Orville snarled, tugging jerkily at his wisp of mustache. "He was called No'o Rea when he was a young man."

The young native's eyes widened. One or two of his companions who had drawn near to listen uttered short exclamations of surprize.

"It is many years since my father was so called," the chief's son explained, a puzzled frown settling between his smooth brows.

"Is that so! Well, is he alive?"

"My father lives, but he is feeble and old. But for that he would have greeted you himself. White men are always welcome here."

No'o the younger spoke quietly and with simple dignity. Men were apt to get jarred at first by Orville's brusk tones.

"I'm going ashore now to see him. Tell him that Katafa has returned."

The son of No'o grew suddenly rigid. His companions tensed and drew in their breaths sharply. Wonder and unbelief chased across their faces, and then the face of the young man lit with a glad smile. He drew back half a pace as a sign of respect and bent his head again.

"Katafa, the Frigate Bird! *Ai*, 'tis a day my father shall be glad to have seen. Katafa, the Frigate Bird! How often have we not heard the tale! Even yet the mothers tell of it to their little ones that they too may grow up strong and brave as thou. 'Twas thou who saved my father and his villages from the terrible white man in the long ago."

Orville grunted and nodded.

"It was. You were small then, a little rat of a brown pickaninny," he said reminiscently. "And your mother was a beautiful woman as I remember."

"She is dead," said the young No'o sadly. "She is dead. But I, her son, give you welcome in her name."

"What's all this about?" whispered Peterson aside.

Orville snorted and glared round at him.

"This is where I get appreciated," he said. "Savvy that? Katafa is a name the natives here and in Samoa gave me. I had the fastest windjammer in the islands in those days, and I used to travel so quickly from place to place the natives called me the Frigate Bird.

"I saved old man No'o—he was young then—from Bully Hayes; he was the terrible white man. I found him shipping a cargo of young women and native laborers from here without their permission when I hit the beach. We had a row, Hayes and I, by those three palms yonder. See them in that curve of sand to the right of that big coral boulder? Lord, that was God knows how long ago!

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[*] Bless you. [†] Ship. [‡] Samoa.

"Now shut up! If I lift my little finger here I can have you staked out under water at high tide to soften you for the long-pig ovens. Is that clear?"

"And you will honor my poor canoe with your presence, Katafa?" the son of No'o was saying humbly.

Orville grunted and nodded and moved abruptly toward the bridge.

"I must first get gifts for your honorable father and much tobacco, for I doubt not there will be great talking of old times. Also I can not stay to feast."

"Shall Katafa have need to get gifts for No'o? That is for strangers who seek favor and women."

"And also for him who has not returned before to see his blood-brother. Wait here for me."

Orville jog-trotted away to get a few things together in a small kit-bag, while No'o the younger talked the marvel over with his excited companions.

Half an hour later Orville went ashore with the son of No'o, a bottle of whisky in his hip pocket and sadness in his heart. Peterson grunted and turned to glower at the carpenter, who nervously backed away. The giant mate had an enviable reputation in the Pacific himself, but he couldn't call any chief his best friend. Nor had he ever known occasions when natives had refused to take his gifts. Most places where he was known his head would rather be seen apart from his body. He considered himself a much better and more even tempered man than Orville, and yet the little millionaire was the friend of chiefs. He couldn't understand it.

JUST what it was Orville and old No'o talked of Peterson never even guessed. Their subject matter was before his time. He had to stay aboard with the carpenter and look after the captives, and he could not get ashore.

But four hours later the little millionaire returned, very gruff as to voice, very wistful as to eye, his shirt stained with much cigar-ash and his breath scented with much good whisky. He had been reliving days over thirty years gone by, and perhaps the experience had brought home to him the inevitableness of time. He had seen No'o the great chief, blind, feeble, drooling, squatting motionless as he had squatted for years, mumbling over tales of hot endeavor and lordly aims.

It brought to Orville perhaps that for all his own aggressiveness and fire there was something lacking in him, something he had left strewn on the shining pathways of the years. The golden youth that had been his had gone. When he had first seen No'o he had been young and strong, and the chief had been young and strong too, as the young No'o was now. Both of them had been lithe and able, ready for laughter and flowers, made for women's smiles and the anger of other strong men.

But all was gone. The brave days were no more. Their creatures were dead. Or else they were like old, blind, drooling No'o, dead in all but name, mere shells in which the fires of other years had long since died.

It seemed a sacrilege for him, Orville, to sail the old paths again and to resurrect old dreams and call to life ghosts that were better dead. It was not right for him to recall their hot and lost youth to doddering old men. He himself was an exception, and he ought to stay away from those who were of the great majority. Orville had left No'o whimpering when he had at last torn himself away, refusing feasts and flowers, and returned to the *Ionia*.

His sentimental mood lasted perhaps an hour, and then he was his old cynical self once more. There returned from Niuafou with him No'o the younger to help his father's friend and thirty stalwart men, smooth-muscled, broad-shouldered and strong, such men as brought joy into the heart of Mackenzie when he saw them.

Orville gave the chief twenty men for the stokehole, and the Scotchman took them below gleefully to initiate them into the mysteries of tending fires and watching steam-gages.

"They are not here as paid help exactly, chief," Orville told the Scotchman before he went below. "They are friends helping me in a tight corner, and there must be no spanner work and no unnecessary toil. I ask you as a friend to give them as easy a time as possible. You can get your engine-room in shape when I find you a crew in Sydney and we bring these natives back to their home."

"As ye say, sorr; as ye say. Fra' th' looks o' them Ah'd say they'll be cheerfu' min t' handle. Leave them t' me, sorr."

Then he ushered them into the stokehole, seduced the scared ones below with great coaxing and set them to work with the aid of one of their number who had sailed the Apia schooners and understood broken English.

Orville retained ten men and the young No'o himself for seamen. He had little to teach them, all of them being born on the water, so to speak. An hour or so at the wheel would be sufficient to start them on the road to being good helmsmen; and as for keeping the ship clean and acting as lookouts there was little they could learn about that. In any case Orville did not intend to give his friends any more work than he could help.

With the aid of his raw but willing men the chief managed in less than two hours to get up enough steam to lift the anchor; and also he managed to get the big screw turning, stronger and stronger as the steam head grew greater.

The *Ionia* steamed from the anchorage and headed for the open sea, west southwest for Zephyr Reef. On the white beach astern, supported by four young men, old No'o waved farewell to his son and to his friend Katafa, who had saved him from the terrible white man in the long and long ago.

Orville remained motionless, gazing at the island for a long time, perhaps recalling the day he had first sighted it.

"*To Fa,*"* he murmured at last.

Then he turned bruskly to Peterson, who was showing a native how to steer with the unfamiliar steam aid and explaining to him the five points of the "lubber's line" and the compass card in bastard Samoan.

"Get hold of half a dozen men, Peterson, and take the hatches off number one. According to the ship's plan there's a storeroom down there where Matthews had some ships stores placed—emergency stores in case the lazaret gave out. See if you can find the place. It's somewhere in the after end of the orlop deck.

"Hoist all the stuff you can lay hands on, on deck, enough at least to last that gang aft for a month. There's water on the reef, so we won't need to bother about that."

"Aye, aye, sir," said Peterson; and, leaving the native helmsman, he went down the companion to the fore well-deck and called the seamen to him.

Orville crossed to the wheel and stood by the native for a while to see that he grasped the principles of the thing properly, and then he called the carpenter from the after end of the bridge, deck where he was unlatching the engine-room skylight, to come and take his place. The little millionaire made for the speaking-tube to the engine-room and blew down it hard. The chief's slow voice answered after a while.

" 'Lo. Ah, sorr, Ah've some guid min here now."

"Glad t' hear it. Say, chief, how long before I can get a full head of steam?"

"Steam? Ye sh'll ha' all th' steam ye need wi'in twa hours."

"Let her go full ahead on the engines as soon as you can. Is that clear?"

"Aye, as soon as Ah c'n. Ah've laid aside ma spanner noo, so ye c'n judge how Ah'm fixed."

"That's right, chief; treat 'em gentle. They're good fellows."

"As ye say, sorr. Goo'-by."

Orville grunted and jammed back the plug into the tube. He thought rapidly. The *Ionia's* full speed was eight knots. Zephyr Reef was just one degree, about seventy miles, west southwest from Good Hope Island. That meant approximately nine hours run, less with luck, more without.

The carpenter, looking through the glass windows in the fore end of the chart-house behind him, saw that the hands of the clock screwed on the bulkhead were together and heard the clock commence to strike. Reaching for the manrope knot in the lanyard above him, he struck eight bells smartly.

Orville looked ahead and grunted. Noon. He had forgotten to take a sight, but it didn't much matter when he had the bearings of the Good Hope Island to go by behind him. Dusk should bring the ship to Zephyr Reef. Night should see her standing for Sydney again, rid of her load of murderers.

Leaving the bridge for a moment, Orville went to his room and poured himself a drink. Strangely enough, he did not drink it hurriedly as he usually did. He raised the glass as if to a friend and said aloud—

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* Good-by.

"You were a man."

Then he drank with care. He was thinking of old No'o.

Peterson poked his head inside the cabin after Orville had grunted a "Come in" to his knock.

"Have you got a plan of that storeroom's location, sir?" the giant mate said. "I'll have to shift about a hundred tons of cargo, and I want to know just in what corner of the orlop the place is."

Orville snarled and lit a cigar before replying.

"Must I lead you around by the hand, you great lump of a man? When I give an order it's up to you to get it done. Don't keep running to me for instructions, —— it. Get it done! I'll blasted soon kick if I've anything to say. Is that clear? Get it done! I don't give a —— how. Have you ever thought that a plan of the ship is usually nailed up on the chart-house bulkhead?"

"I have, sir. There isn't one on this ship."

"There's isn't? My mistake. I took it down because it was too high for me to see properly. You'll find it in the lower chart drawer. Don't stand there grinning like a —— fool. We all make mistakes."

"Mistakes? Yes, sir," Peterson responded, still grinning, and ducked out of sight as the little millionaire raised his glass threateningly.

Dusk brought the *Ionia* to her destination. Orville had a Kanaka in the fore rigging and another in the after rigging keeping a sharp lookout, and they sighted the low-lying patch of land that the charts called Zephyr Reef just as the sun was dipping into the crimson sea. The ship had made better steaming-time than Orville had judged, owing to her having had a strong wind on her quarter and seemingly being aided along by a gentle westerly current.

The little millionaire was in his cabin taking a drink when the cry came from the lookouts.

"Land! Land!"

He finished his drink hastily, downed the glass to the table with a bang and then skipped out on to the bridge, where Peterson was already peering through a pair of glasses away to the starboard bow.

XII

THE air was filled with the low thunder of the restless sea upon rock and coral shores, and the foam spouted several feet high in many places. The island—for it was more of an island than a reef—was perhaps half a mile wide and two miles long, and except for a slight rise at one end it was as flat as a billiard-table.

Coarse grass grew all over it in bunches and patches, by no means evenly distributed. Dense flocks of seabirds wheeled above it, their raucous cries heard even above the boom of the breaking sea as they wheeled and swung and prepared to settle finally for the night.

Strangely enough also, two great albatrosses flew high above the slight rise to one end of the island and apparently were living on the place. Orville did not remember ever having seen such birds in that part of the sea before, and he eyed them curiously for a while before turning his attention to a boat-landing.

"There's some sort of a shelving rock beach on the south shore unless I'm mistaken," he told Peterson, who merely grunted and crossing to the telegraph, rang for half-speed.

"Going to anchor, sir?" he said; then over his shoulder to the helmsman, "Port a bit!"

Orville shook his head as he raised the glasses.

"I've never anchored here, so I don't think I'll chance it. And I don't think it'll be necessary. We can get rid of our passengers in a couple of hours."

"Landing them tonight?"

"I am. Do you think I c'n wait till morning to do that and lose all that time? Get the two after boats launched and brought round amidships. Load the stores into them. I'm going to let the ship drift for a bit."

"Aye, aye, sir."

Peterson went down the companion to the fore well-deck, summoned the native seamen to him and then took them aft to launch the lifeboats that rested in their chocks on the poop. Orville turned to the carpenter, who was waiting for orders by the open door of the chart-house.

"Get in the chains, mister."

The carpenter dived into the chart-house, secured the hand lead-line and clattered down to the fore well-deck. He had the small square chain-grating, attached to the bulwarks just for'ard of the mast, lowered in a very short time, and, stepping overboard on to it, had taken his first cast before Orville rang "Stop" and allowed the *Ionia* to drift slowly on to the island.

"By the mark ten!"

Orville grunted, dropped the glasses into the box made to receive them just under the dodger and crossed to the starboard bridge wing, which happened to be nearest to the land. He eyed the breaking seas intently.

"By the deep eight!"

The carpenter's voice held that monotonous, toneless sound common when seamen are calling depths.

"And a half seven!"

Orville crossed to the telegraph and rang half-astern. The *Ionia* very slowly came to a standstill.

"Up and down?" Orville shouted to his leadsman.

The carpenter nodded, spat into the water and then carefully plumbed the sea under the ship's keel.

"Mark seven, sir, up and down!"

"Mark seven up and down. Over forty feet. That'll do. Stand by the lead and see she doesn't drift into shallow water."

"Stand by the lead, sir."

"Peterson! Got those boats launched yet?"

Orville cupped his hands round his mouth and shouted aft.

Peterson growled something to himself about what did the skipper think he was, a flying-machine? And then called back aloud—

"Just a minute, sir."

"Slow, slow. No snap!" snarled Orville wrathfully to no one in particular, and he trotted across the bridge and glared into the binnacle to see how the *Ionia's* head lay.

It was some ten minutes later before the boats were towed round the stern and brought alongside opposite number one hatch, where the stores from the forehold were piled. Rapidly they were transferred to the boats, by which time it was dark and the stars were glowing coldly across the whispering sea. Orville had an electric cluster brought from below, and that gave ample light for all purposes.

In the boats half a dozen hurricane lamps were placed, already lit, together with a couple of old hatch tarpaulins. Then Orville called Peterson to him and jog-trotted aft. Mackenzie came up from below to see the operations carried out and went aft with his captain and the giant mate.

Orville unlocked the wheel-house door and switched on the lights. Seventeen pairs of eyes blinked in the sudden glare, and seventeen pairs of lips emitted a groan. The mutineers had been tied hand and foot for a long time, and they were not at all comfortable.

They feared now that the end had come. The terrible little skipper was going to hand them over to the police or to some cruiser, or was going to make them work with their feet tied, or was going to do everything except what he did.

He had brought along his native seamen; and under his direction they proceeded to carry the mutineers, bound as they were, along the deck and to the waiting boats, where they were dumped aboard. When the last man had gone Orville switched out the lights, closed the door and, followed by Mackenzie and Peterson, went for'ard again.

He dropped down the pilot-ladder and got into one of the piled boats, ordering Peterson into the stern sheets of the other. Then with an order to the carpenter to light a blue warning flare if the ship showed signs of drifting uncomfortably near to the coast, and telling Mackenzie to consider himself in charge of the *Ionia* for the time being, he pushed off. The native seamen he had with him pulled mightily at the unfamiliar oars; and the mutineers, lying bound and helpless and fearful and numb on the bottom boards, stared wide-eyed and dry-lipped at the bright stars that pulsed in the velvet sky above. The roar of the surf filled their ears.

The landing through the breaking seas was accomplished only with some difficulty, Orville's boat being very nearly upset and the bound men on her bottom boards precipitated into the boiling water. But the danger was over at last after much profanity and tugging at oars and after a great deal of spume had been shipped over the gunwales; and both lifeboats were drawn up clear of the sucking backwash.

Under Orville's orders the native seamen transferred the mutineers from the boats to the rocky, grass-bepatched ground and there left them in a ragged row. With Peterson and No'o, who had come to see what was doing, Orville took one of the hurricane lamps and trotted hastily along the low coast toward the slight rise at one end of the island, over which he had seen the two albatrosses hovering before sunset.

The island was swarming with tiny crabs and peculiar, greenish-colored small turtles creeping over and among the packed guano and broken remnants of nests. Except for the seabirds, gulls and mews, which started up to the right and left of the little millionaire's path, flying blindly into one another and filling the night with harsh rustlings and hideous cries that drowned even the song of the sea, there was no other life on the island. At the foot of the rise, little more than an incline of a few degrees, Orville found what he sought—the brackish spring of water that welled up from the heart of the volcanic rock through the sand and pounded coral and spilled in a tiny river down through a shallow gully to the sea.

IN SPITE of his haste Orville held his lamp so that it gleamed on the faintly discolored water, and he regarded it in silence for a few moments. He recalled the day he had first seen it and sighed.

Like all scenes of Orville's past it was lurid with memories, recalling forgotten faces and words, bringing back whispering ghosts to peer and chuckle, resurrecting old hates and older loves, reminiscent of all the golden years of youth that were his no more.

He sighed again and then said. "Still here," in a dead voice and bent and scooped up a little of the water in the palm of his hand to taste it.

It was slightly brackish, not salt, but with a tinge of iron in it, not at all pleasant to drink, though quite harmless if drunk for only a short while. Peterson tasted it also and then No'o, the latter spitting it out with a grimace.

"Ugh!" he spluttered. "Surely, Katafa, you will not cause the white men to drink that?"

Peterson too protested.

"Perhaps we ought to leave a couple of breakers with them."

"Leave nothing."

Orville snorted and tugged at his mustache.

"I lived on that rotten liquor for three weeks once. It gave me boils. I hope it does the same for my gang. They're going to drink it. Yes, No'o, I shall cause them to drink this or die."

The son of the chief bowed his head and said very gravely:

"As you say, Katafa. Who am I to question? To the filthy shall filth be given."

"Right enough."

Orville laughed softly. It sounded almost like a purr.

"I saw Wallace Hawke—you know him, Peterson—kill a man by that very spring. Killed him with his naked hands."

"What for?" Peterson was curious enough to ask, endeavoring to see his employer's face above the ring of the lamplight.

"Oh, about the spelling of a word, I think it was. Men get funny ideas when they're starving."

"You were starving then?"

Orville nodded and waved the lamplight around. Then he braced his shoulders and shivered a trifle as if something were touching him from behind.

"Le's get out of this blasted place," he snarled.

The three men retraced their steps to where the lamps glimmered by the two boats and the rest of the seamen and the bound mutineers waited. Harry, the fireman, the man with the violet eyes, raised himself with some difficulty on one elbow when he saw Orville approaching.

He gave a slow look all around on the bleak scene, the only splashes of color being the circle of lamplight, the white-painted bows of the lifeboats, the occasional bird that drifted into the circle and shot away again with a squawk and the rim of white surf that edged the shore. A bleak and desolate scene. No trees, no shade from the blasting heat of day, no habitation.

"You ain't going to leave us here, sir," Harry whined almost tearfully. "Gawd, we'll die—die!"

Orville snarled.

"I hope so. Save me the trouble of having you tried. If you really want to oblige me you will die."

"But about water, sir? And about food? You ain't going to leave us here alone for ever? Not for ever, sir? You'll come back?"

"Not quite forever, you pup. I'm sending a cruiser to fetch you. You're going to see Suva and the rope I expect before you kick the bucket.

"There's water to one end of this hunk of land if you look for it. It gave me boils once. I hope you grow 'em. They're painful. Get those stores ashore, Peterson."

The yellow-haired mate gave orders to the native seamen standing by the boats' bows, and the stores were rapidly piled up on the beach, enough to last for about a month. The two hatch tarpaulins would give shelter if rigged over poles made from pieces of the wooden cases holding canned salmon, beef, biscuits. The mutineers had plenty of time to invent ways and means of tent-making anyway. Orville was not worrying.

The little millionaire bent and cut the bonds securing Harry of the violet eyes. The man was unable to sit up for a few moments, so numbed were his limbs. But he raised his arms and clawed Orville's coat down to him.

Spasmodically he shook the little man. A great fear dawned in his eyes. That he spoke for his shipmates was plain. The fear was in their eyes too, and they watched Orville intently and writhed with the impotent feeling that came to them as their bonds cut and ground deeper.

Orville regarded the man clinging to him grimly.

"Let go!" he said, and his voice was as cold as the wind that sweeps the reaches of the North.

Even Peterson shivered. Only once before had he heard Orville use that tone, and the memory of that time was limned in red on the giant mate's brain.

"Not alone, sir! Don't leave us alone! No, sir! We'll come back and work, work like ——, sir. But don't leave us alone—not here! Not here on this rock with only the sea and the birds!"

The man was sobbing with terror as he sensed the awful days ahead.

"Let go!"

Other pleading voices broke in, sobbing, snarling, cursing, praying. The mutineers were deadly afraid of the loneliness. Anything else they could face with more or less equanimity. But loneliness! It led to madness. Seventeen men on a barren rock and nothing to do!

"Let go!"

"You wouldn't do it—you wouldn't do it——"

Even Peterson shifted uncomfortably, and No'o's great, soft eyes filled with tears. It was pitiful.

Orville slowly shook his head. His face was utterly expressionless. He was remote, tranquil, aloof. He reminded one of the Samurai. His eyes coldly surveyed the man who still pawed at his jacket. Then he shook him off, and the man dropped with a mumbled, "Don't, sir," and was quiet.

Orville's gaze swept the other mutineers.

"Shut up!" he snarled.

"Here!"

He flung down the knife he had cut Harry's bonds with.

"When we've gone this man can cut you loose. I'll see you later in Fiji—those who are not dead!

"In the boats, Peterson. Get 'em launched. Easy in the surf! Hold her! That's good. Steady now! Give way, all!"

The lifeboats shot away toward the drifting *Ionia*, followed by the fearful cries from the mouthing, terror-stricken mutineers. The three hurricane lamps left ashore shed a sickly light on upraised white faces, strange, unshaven, bulging-eyed. Then the roar of the surf drowned all sound, and the spume and the night mist shut all from view save the lamp-gleams. Orville grunted as he clambered up the pilot-ladder on to the *Ionia's* well-deck for'ard.

"Good riddance," he said to no one in particular, and Peterson sighed with relief that the icy note had gone from his voice.

The little millionaire went up on the bridge after a while and rang for full speed, while Peterson went with the native seamen to hoist the boats back into their chocks on the poop deck. The *Ionia* slowly began to gather way and forge ahead, swifter every moment. Her head swung round, and the wake behind her began to boil and foam white. She was off again on the long run to Sydney.

Behind her three faint lights merged to one and winked for quite a long time, while faint cries came on the wind. But perhaps they were caused by the mewing of the disturbed gulls.

Orville remained for nearly an hour, motionless as an iron stanchion, gazing ahead into the night and across the whispering sea. Nor did any man care to speak to him until Zephyr Reef had sunk far astern.

THE routine of the *Ionia* became monotonous again. There was little that occurred to relieve the general smoothness of existence and the orderliness of the every-day grind.

Now that the mutineers had been disposed of there was nothing left to cast a jarring note in the ship's machinery. The night after leaving Zephyr Reef passed by without event, and the morning broke clear and calm with the wind dropping and the sea settling to that glassy smoothness so frequent in the tropics in the calmest of weather.

Orville, Peterson and the carpenter took watch-and-watch about steering and keeping the bridge and watching the natives who were learning to handle the wheel and the ship's regular work. No'o made a good bosun once he was informed what jobs needed doing and how they had to be done.

It was agreed between Orville and him that as soon as the *Ionia* reached Sydney a white crew was to be employed, and the natives of Good Hope Island were to be given free transportation back to their native land on the same ship they were working on. No'o and No'o's father had only Orville's word to go on that they would be treated fairly, but the word of Katafa was better to them than a signed paper from any other white man.

Mackenzie had of course the hardest job of all. He had not one assistant engineer, and he put in some really heroic work. He had his mattress stretched on the gratings that ran round the cylinder-heads, and he both ate and slept below, never coming on deck for more than a minute or two at a time.

Luckily he had a fine crew of strong and willing men. He had no necessity to use his twelve-inch shifting-spanner or to look carefully round door jambs before passing through.

But he had to be in the engine-room every moment of the twenty-four hours in case those on the bridge should ring the telegraph. Also he had to oil his engines himself and watch his steam gages, having found that his natives could not understand the absolute necessity of not letting steam get above a certain pressure.

All in all he had a very rough time of it; but he stuck grimly to the job. He snatched sleep when and where he could; and sometimes Orville, who understood a little about steam engines, would come down and stand a few hour's watch for him while he slept on his mattress on the gratings.

It was in the little millionaire's mind that he would enter up Mackenzie in his little thin private book of tried and trusted employees. Also he doubled Mackenzie's wages, explaining to him that as he was doing the work of four engineers he was entitled at least to the pay of two.

"AH'M no' worrkin' li' a horrse, ye'll unnerstan'," the chief had said one watch when Orville had gone below to tell him about his decision. "Ah'm no' worrkin' li' a horrse becaus' o' any money th' mi' be in th' job. Na, sorr. 'Tis becaus' Ah'll ha' no mon say tha' Mackenzie quit fra fain' hearrt. Ah've stuck t' this ship fra' 'Frisco, an ungodly town, an' Ah'll stick till ah see her safe at her voyage en'. Alsa Ah've a likin' f' ye, li'l mon though ye be. Ye've guts, an' Ah inten' t' see ye thro'."

Orville had grunted at this, snarled out some thanks and gone on deck again to chuckle to himself as soon as he was out of the chief's hearing. He was glad he had doubled Mac's wages.

The little millionaire went about like a stuffed-up turkey-cock for some time, crowing over his adept handling of the affairs of the *Ionia* till Peterson was too disgusted even to growl his wrath.

"Brains and guts are what's needed," Orville told his giant mate during one forenoon watch as they paced the bridge together. "Brains and guts. Old Gillman didn't have either, and he had to go. You haven't got a great supply, Peterson; I mean of brains. Don't glower at me, —— it!

"They said I never had 'em. You'll observe I have. Yes, sir.

"That drunken swine Delroy said I couldn't handle a ship of my own now. Can I? You know I can. You've fallen down on your job since coming aboard. You came to protect me. I have to spend half my nights and all of my days running around looking after you. Don't snort! Is that clear?

"They said I was no good except to guzzle whisky and gin and stay in Apia. They said I was old and feeble-minded and stood with one leg in the grave. Do I? I'll show 'em!"

"Yes, sir," said Peterson dutifully; for it is a chief officer's job to agree with his skipper in all matters and to soothe him in time of stress.

Also the yellow-haired giant didn't know what else to say. He was very wrathful, but he had to admit that the little millionaire was right. He personally had fallen down on his self-appointed task of looking after his employer. It was galling.

"Glad you agree," snarled Orville, jerking at his mustache and chewing industriously on his cigar, evidently getting great enjoyment out of prodding his chief officer. "Don't see how the blasted —— you could help it after— What's that, what's that?"

"Sail on the port bow, sir," the carpenter repeated, shouting from the fore well-deck, where he was folding up the great stay'ls with the aid of the native seamen so that they could be stowed away below in the forepeak again.

Orville trotted across to the glass box and peered through the glasses away in the direction the carpenter had given. He saw the vessel at once, a big three-masted schooner coming up from the south hand over hand with all sail set and evidently bringing her own wind with her, for it was still calm about the *Ionia.*

But the next moment the little millionaire felt the first breeze stir against his cheek, and a vast sigh seemed to pass over the unruffled swells, leaving them altogether changed. Then the wind came fair and strong, and the sea broke into a million whisperings and was dotted with tiny bursting whitecaps. Orville grunted and handed the glasses to Peterson.

"It's the *Allie Girl*," he said. "She ought to have been in Apia before I left. Henderson's made a —— long voyage of it. Been picking up a bunch of shell at Savage Island. Get the flags; I'll talk to him."

"International or semaphore?"

"Semaphore. Others take too blasted long."

Peterson, after a brief look through the glasses, went into the chart-house and fished out a pair of little-used, stained and tattered semaphore flags. He brought them to Orville, who gave a grunt of thanks and then snarled at their condition.

"How are you going to talk with Henderson? Does he understand semaphore?" asked the giant mate. "Not many schooner captains do. They learn, of course, but they forget, hardly ever being called upon to use the code."

"Is that so? Huh! Henderson was with me through the Boer War. He was a wooz at flags then. If he hasn't forgotten—I'll fire him if he has!—he'll get my message. Get out of my way, you big slob of a man. Here, give me a hoist on top of the port wing."

Peterson grinned and, putting forth a huge hand, lifted his employer so that the little millionaire could catch hold of the deck-head of the bridge wing and haul himself up. Orville managed to get on his feet at last, and he brushed his whites down with one hand and shook the flags clear with the other. Then he snorted and glared in the direction of the oncoming schooner.

"*Allie Girl,*" said Peterson thoughtfully. "One of your ships, eh, sir? Named after——"

"Leave my niece out of it. Do your lovemaking ashore. Yes, that's my ship. She flies my house flag. Run one up at the main truck of this packet. Jump to it!"

"Aye, aye, sir."

Peterson called to the carpenter, and the old man came up from the fore well-deck with some haste. Peterson gave him the bundle of bunting that was the Orville & Company house flag, blue stars on a white ground, and told him to hoist it at once.

Orville had the *Ionia's* head brought so that she would pass the *Allie Girl* about half a mile on the port beam. As soon as the schooner, racing superbly before the stiffening breeze, saw the house flag break from the main truck of the dingy-looking tramp and the marine ensign break from the stern flagstaff, she came in a bit and drew toward the *Ionia.*

Glaring from under the peak of his white-topped seaman's cap, Orville could see Captain John Henderson, broad, short, red-faced and white-haired, standing on the poop in cotton pajamas and a broad-brimmed straw hat and watching him through a pair of glasses. Evidently he recognized his old war-mate and employer, for he suddenly lifted his hat and waved it frantically. Orville snarled and raised his flag.

"Orville talking," he spelled out with the fluttering bunting on the slender sticks.

Captain Henderson waved that he understood.

"Tell Apia mutiny on *Ionia,* bound Apia to Sydney. Master Seth Orville. Matters well in hand past two days. Practically no assistance except chief engineer."

Peterson, reading from the bridge below, grunted his wrath at this.

"Marooned mutineers Zephyr Reef, Lat. 16° S., Long. 176° 49'."

But it was too much for Captain Henderson's memory, and he sent the repeat sign and summoned one of his mates to his side with a note-book and pencil. Also he checked the way of the *Allie Girl* altogether.

"What the ——'s the matter with your blasted memory?" Orville bellowed querulously across the sea as if the captain could hear.

Then he laboriously spelled out the latter half of his message over again. Continuing:

"Send cruiser pick up. Inform Matthews opinion of him is still low. Tell boys I'll show 'em. Get new ratlines on port shrouds of fore rigging. Your ship looks disgraceful from here. Good-by."

Orville clambered down from the top of the bridge wing, Peterson catching him in his great arms, and snorted as he watched the *Allie Girl* swing on her course again and Captain John Henderson wave good-by from the poop deck, probably wondering whether his old friend was mad as he read the message his mate handed him over and over again. It was not till he reached Samoa that he understood.

"Have to let them know in Apia I'm still alive. I believe they all went and put in list orders for wreaths to shove around a plaque they expected would be raised to me on the wharfside. Bunk! I c'n show all the old fools the rounds of the kitchen."

"Yes, sir," murmured Peterson.

"Don't stand there grinning, —— it! You know it's so. Hello, there's the chief whistling."

He trotted across to the speaking-tube.

"Ah unnerstan' ye've spoke t' a ship a while back, sorr," the slow, rasping voice of Mackenzie drifted up.

"I did. Vessel of mine, chief. *Allie Girl*, registered in Suva. Fastest ship of her size afloat in the South. I sent word back to Apia of our little trouble on this packet. Mentioned you had rendered me valuable assistance."

"Ye're kin', sorr. Ah'll rremember th' compleemen'."

"Huh-huh! Getting on all right below? How's th' natives turning out?"

"Ah'll rreserve judgmen', sorr, if ye've no min'. Th' chiels's willin', but—" there was infinite sadness in the chief's tone— "'tis a harrd job Ah've here. An' Ah canna use ma spanner."

"You can't. Make the best of 'em till Sydney, chief. I'm shipping a white crew there, and we'll take these Kanakas back to Good Hope Island."

"So, so! Well, Ah guess Ah c'n stick t' it. In spi' o' all ye'll notice Ah still ha' oop steam; aye, still ha' steam oop."

"Good man. Very busy just now. See you later. 'By."

"Goo'-by, sorr," the chief responded and plugged his end of the tube with great deliberation.

Orville snorted, rammed his plug back with some force and trotted back to Peterson.

"—— long-winded begger, the chief," he snarled. "As I was saying, I c'n show all the old fools the rounds of the kitchen. You don't believe it? Just remember what that Walker bird would have done to your face, eh? That brings you up with a round turn, m'son.

"Now then, quartermaster, bring her three points west! That's it. Steady!

"Peterson, le's go and drink. My ——, but I'm thirsty! This climate never did agree with me."

MASONIC SIGN SAVES OFFICER FROM INDIAN MASSACRE

by Lewis Appleton Barker

NO INDIAN was more famous, and justly so, in Revolutionary times than Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea) of the Five Nations. He was a Mohawk of pure blood. The youngest son of a chief of the Onondaga nation, his Indian name signified "a bundle of sticks."

His childhood was spent in the home of Sir William Johnson, with whom his mother lived after the death of his father. She later marrying an Indian known as Brant, Thayendanegea, being called Joseph, was known as Brant's Joseph or Joseph Brant. He was educated at the school of Dr. Wheelock, of Lebanon (now Columbia), Connecticut. After having acted as missionary interpreter and having exerted himself for the religious instruction of his tribe, he went in 1775 to London.

Throughout the Revolution he warred chiefly upon the border settlements of New York and Pennsylvania, together with the Johnsons and Butlers, holding a colonel's commission from the king in the British Army. During the night of the 19th of July, 1779, at the head of sixty Indians and twenty-seven Tories, he stole upon the little town of Minisink, New York. With no means of defense, the inhabitants endeavored to fly to the mountains. Their stockade, a mill and twelve houses and barns were burned; many were killed, some taken prisoners, and everything laid waste, their cattle being driven away.

News of the attack reaching Goshen, the local militia to the number of one hundred and forty-nine under Dr. Tusten started in pursuit of the invaders, although Dr. Tusten, well knowing the skill, prowess and craftiness of Brant, opposed the measure as hazardous with so small a force. He was overruled, however; and, being reenforced the next day by Colonel Hathorn of the Warwick militia—who took command—with a small body, they started upon the Indian trail.

At nine in the morning the enemy were in full view, but Brant, cleverly concealing his men by intervening hills, wheeled his columns, executed a flank movement and caught them in an ambuscade. The conflict began at eleven o'clock and continued until the setting of the sun. The ammunition of the militia was stinted, and they were outnumbered and outgeneraled.

Closer and closer the savages pressed in upon the whites until the latter were completely hemmed in. At twilight the battle was as yet undecided, many of the red men having fallen. But the ammunition of the whites becoming exhausted, the enemy broke their hollow square and a scene of slaughter commenced.

Behind a ledge of rocks Dr. Tusten had been dressing the wounds of the injured. He and seventeen wounded were slain. Those who attempted to escape by swimming were shot by the Indians, and of the whole number only about thirty returned to tell of the dreadful scenes of the day.

The massacre of the wounded is one of the darkest stains on the record of Brant, who was usually known for far more honor and humanity than his Tory allies.

During the battle Brant perceived Major Wood of Goshen, who was about to be tomahawked, make what Brant took to be a Masonic sign; and, being himself a Freemason, he rushed in and saved Major Wood's life—at some risk to his own, as the savages were wild with blood. Wood's treatment as a prisoner was kindly, until upon examination Brant discovered that he was not a Mason at all. At first, believing that the major had purposely used the sign to deceive, his life was in great danger, but upon convincing the Mohawk chief that it was purely an accident, he was spared and finally exchanged, when he made all haste to join the fraternity through the instrumentality of which his life had been prolonged.

Brant died at his residence at the head of Lake Ontario, November 24th, 1807, aged 65 years. One of his sons was an officer in the English Army in the War of 1812, while his daughter married William J. Kerr of Niagara, and was living in 1860.

THE RAID

By William Wells

Author of "When Bill Applegate Made His Will," "A Death Fight," etc.

DICK BANNION, the grizzled fur-trader, broke into the discussion as to the relative merits of Indians, good and otherwise, which was occupying the group around the camp-fire.

"Indians aren't so bad when you get to know 'em," he asserted, "and you fellows haven't the right idea when you think they're such a lot different from white men. I know the only way to get along with some of them was to kill 'em off—they were just like horse-killing wolves and couldn't be learned any better—but at that they were acting like they'd been brought up to do; and the whites haven't such an awful edge on the reds—they've done plenty things as bad or worse.

"Take the Crows, that were as big horse-thieves as ever cut a stake-rope, that sent their war-parties all over the mountains, licked —— out of everything they ran across and kept their lodges full of scalps hanging to dry in the smoke; you'd think they were a bad layout, but they weren't; they were a mighty fine tribe, and as brave as they make 'em. When the Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapahoes along the Platte had thinned out their own buffalo so that meat was getting scarce and they figured on going up to whip the Crows to get more, the Crows sent 'em word to come on and promised not to eat the hearts of any of 'em, because if a Crow warrior did that it would make a coward out of him. So the Platte Indians took another think and made up their minds they didn't want the Crow buffalo range.

"I went out with a Crow war-party once and it sure did me—when I want a little excitement I'll tackle a young grizzly with a knife, like Jim Baker did once to see what it was like, or something easy like that—because when those Crows got to going right they were altogether too careless about themselves and everybody else to be good company to be in.

"I was a whole lot younger than I am now; up at a trading-post on the Yellowstone that did a big business with the Crows, and the trader used to send me out with a few packs of goods to Winter in the villages and pick up what extra pelts I could and keep the Crows friendly, which was easy enough. Living with them I was just like one of the tribe, dressed like them, hunted with them and got to thinking like them after a while, which was why I went on a raid.

"The second Spring I was there I went in to the post with my robes and furs, but it had been a cold dry Winter and a late Spring, the river was low and the boats bringing up fresh goods would be late so

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I went back to the Crow camp—I could have a better time there than loafing around the fort.

"I was pretty friendly with a bunch of the young men—nine of them—that made up one of the clans they have, and they'd taken me in, giving me a name that means 'Man with Guns,' on account of me having them to trade, guns being mighty scarce among them in those times. They'd give a pile of beaver for one of those old smooth-bore trade-guns. The gang was all paired off—that's the way they do; two stick together through everything and if one gets killed in a fight the other will try to save the body from being scalped, and things like that—and I was side partner with one they called Little Calf, because of a buffalo calf that had strayed from its mother coming into camp the day he was born, and he was sure a mighty fine Indian.

"None of this bunch had done anything yet to give them warrior names, they still having their kid ones, and they were just pawing the dirt to go out and make a reputation for themselves. Besides, it was Spring and they were beginning to look at the girls and the girls to make eyes back, but that's all the good it did any of them. Before a young man could set up housekeeping he had to have horses, hunting and war-horses, horses to drag the *travois* and to pack in meat, not to mention a bunch to trade to the girl's old man for her, and as my gang had only a few old plugs the quickest way to get what they wanted was to go lift a band of good horses off some other tribe.

"I reckon all the nine had their girls picked out and I know Little Calf did, because he had to talk about her or bust and used to keep me awake nights telling about her. She was the daughter of Black Elk, one of the big war-chiefs, and so pretty she was called the Fawn and her price was sky-high—ten buffalo runners or war-horses Black Elk wanted, no common horses would do—and that was all the same as a million dollars; nobody but Black Elk and a few of the old chiefs that didn't want another squaw having that many. Of course there was plenty that was in the same fix that Little Calf was—they wanted the Fawn but didn't have the price—and one big hulking warrior they called Stone Breaker, that had four wives already, bragged he would have the Fawn before snow flew, and was getting up a party to make a raid on the Sioux and collect some horses which the Sioux were owing the Crows—or so Stone Breaker claimed.

"This didn't suit the Fawn—she'd got a notion in her head she wanted Little Calf—nor him either, and they used to meet on the sly, the Fawn scared to death for fear Stone Breaker would get her and begging Little Calf to save her, stirring him up until he was about ready to make a sneak on Stone Breaker and chuck him in the river with an arrow through his ribs, and the only way out was to get to Black Elk first with the ten horses and beat Stone Breaker to it.

"The rest of the clan was more or less in the same fix, though not so crowded as Little Calf, their girls was roasting 'em for being so slow, so after mixing medicine they decided to make a raid on the Blackfeet, lift what horses they wanted and what scalps they could on the side, fixing themselves for life or get killed trying, and the girls patted 'em on the back and told 'em to go atter it. Of course I had to go along—I didn't have much sense then. I wanted to help Little Calf, and I wanted to see what a raid was like, which I sure did.

"This wasn't a regular war-party, you understand, going out under the war-chiefs to get even with the Blackfeet for something they'd done to the Crows—and what the two tribes did to each other in those days was a plenty—just a little private affair.

"When we were getting ready the clan said my hair wasn't long enough, that if we got in a pinch and the Blackfeet saw I was a white they'd try awful hard to take me alive; which considering what they did to prisoners would be unpleasant; so some of the girls that was interested in the outcome took me in hand and with black hair out of a horse's tail and spruce gum to make it stick fixed me up with two of the finest braids you ever saw. After I was painted you couldn't have told me from a Crow ten feet away.

"We pulled out one night—you never knew but what the scouts from an enemy war-party were watching—afoot, it being easier to keep under cover and hide the trail that way. I had the only gun in the party, a rifle, flint-lock muzzle-loader of course, the rest carrying bows and arrows, knives and a hatchet or war-club. We were stripped down, nothing but moccasins, leggings and a light buffalo-robe apiece, with some buckskin to patch moccasins.

"You know how a war-party travels—moves at night and lays up in cover during the day, killing their meat quiet with bows and arrows—and that's what we did. It was three hundred miles up to where we could expect to run into a Blackfoot village, though we might bump into a party of them out on a raid same as we were, at any time. So we slipped along easy for a couple of weeks and then, knowing we were well up into Blackfoot country, one morning we climbed on to a high butte for a look.

"The side of the butte wasn't very steep and was timbered, so we followed up a little stream of water that came down a gulch, and where it came out from under the rim rock we ran on to a big buck deer and killed it. After we'd built a dry wood-fire and eat about half the deer we went on top through a crack in the rock, coming out under some scrub-pines, and sat there watching.

"All around was rolling country, mostly open, with timber and brush along the creeks, and off to the north, twenty miles anyway, was another big butte sticking up. There was plenty of game in sight, buffalo, elk and antelope, and the way it was acting feeding or laying down and not restless—showed it hadn't been hunted for a while.

"Just the second those Crows looked at the other butte they were interested, but I couldn't make out anything—it was so far it looked blue; so I was watching a couple of buffalo bulls knocking the stuffing out of each other almost under us when Little Calf told me they could see the smoke of a big village over at the butte. I asked him how they knew it wasn't the smoke from a timber fire and he said it was too thin, just the haze from the morning fires in the lodges. Those Indians could tell that, and I couldn't even see the smoke.

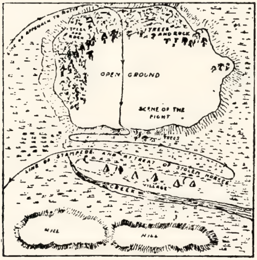
"The village was bound to be Blackfeet—we were right in the middle of their range—and was what we were looking for; but now we'd found it I began to get scared. It came to me all at once what we were up against. Here was ten of us youngsters, all green at the game, going up against hundreds of seasoned warriors and figuring on running off a bunch of their best horses, the ones that would be watched the closest and that they'd try the hardest to get back if we did make a getaway. Nothing of that kind was bothering Little Calf and the rest, though; they were Crows with the reputation of the tribe to keep up, and sat there watching the smoke fierce and steady, like I've seen wolves watch a wounded buffalo.

"After a while, leaving three men to take turns watching, the rest of us went back to the spring and a couple of the Crows scouted around and brought in the meat from another deer. This we jerked, cutting it into thin strips and hanging it on poles over little dry wood-fires that didn't show any smoke above the tree-tops. That was so we wouldn't have to kill any game after we got close to the Blackfoot camp, for there'd be scouts and hunters out, boys and young men herding horses, and lookouts on every hill, every one of 'em with eyes on all sides of their heads ready to notice even a bird acting out of the way and come nosing around to see what it meant.

"Everybody took turns sleeping and tending the meat till sunset, when we finished what was left of the first buck, rolled our jerky up in our robes and at dark were at the foot of our butte pulling out for the Blackfoot camp. We traveled fast—trot until we were winded, slow up to get our breath and light out again, for if we didn't want the Blackfeet to be holding a big dance around our scalps, or maybe around us tied loose-like to a stake with a rawhide, and fire handy. It was up to us to work fast—every hour meant a bigger chance that we'd be seen or our trail picked up; and once the Blackfeet saw the print of a Crow moccasin they'd be after us like coyotes after a cottontail.

"Inside of two hours the flat top of the butte began to show up black against the skyline, and we headed well off to the left, for the Crows figured on getting the butte between them and the village, which lay along its foot on the side next us, and climbing the butte to size up the layout and plan the best way to cut out a band of horses the next night. Before that I'd thought I was some runner, but those Crows took it out of me—they strung out like scared antelope and like to ran my legs off, for we could see by the dipper that we'd better hurry if we didn't want daylight to catch us put in the open. By the time we came to the bottom of the butte my tongue was hanging out and my knees knocking. If they hadn't laid down to rest I'd have done it alone, even if the Blackfeet caught me; I was that near all in.

"That side of the butte was steep and covered with pines, but we didn't have any trouble getting up, coming out on the rim rock just as the first light was showing in the sky off to our left. The top was fairly level and about four hundred yards wide, ridges of rock sticking up in places, grass in the hollows where dirt had gathered, with a few patches of trees and brush scattered around and rain-water in some deep holes in the rock.



"WE STRUCK straight across for where a thick clump of brush stood on the far edge, crawled into it and looked over, and if I'd been scared when we were back at the other butte it wasn't a marker to what I was now.

"The side under us was almost straight down for a couple of hundred feet, and below that slide rock sloping down to a long flat with a creek running down the middle of it, with the Blackfoot lodges, more than three hundred of them, strung along it. We'd run into one of the big bands.

"It was like being right in the village—the butte was only six or seven hundred feet high—for you could see everything and hear the people talking. The camp was just waking up and only a few stirring, some of the lodges didn't have smoke coming out of the tops, and women were packing loads of dead wood from a fringe of quaking aspen along the foot of the slide.

"Everywhere on the grass between the lodges and the butte horses were picketed—the best horses that had been brought in to be safe, and also handy if they were wanted in a hurry—and right under us was a corral made out of poles tied to trees that had more than twenty fine horses inside, most likely a bunch belonging to one of the big chiefs. Across the creek on some low hills were more horses, herds of them scattered everywhere, but of course they were mares and colts, pack and *travois* plugs and that sort of truck; not what the Crows were after.

"We lay there for an hour watching the hunters going out, boys taking horses that were to be kept on picket to the creek for water and moving them to fresh grass, herders taking others out to graze or to be turned loose with the herds, and all the time me wondering how in blazes we were going to get away with any of those horses from the village without getting so many arrows stuck into us that we'd look like a porcupine. Of course it would be easy enough, now that we had them located, to cut a bunch out of the horse-herds that night, but we'd never get to the Crow country with them. The herders would notice the loss the first thing in the morning, there'd be a party after us in an hour and their fast horses would catch ours inside of a hundred miles.

"So I gave it up, crawled back into the brush and went to sleep, some of the Crows doing the same, others staying to figure out the raid and a couple watching our back track across the top of the butte.

"It seemed that I hadn't been asleep a minute when something touched me and I waked up to see all the Crows crawling back to where we'd come into the brush, hugging the ground and pushing their bows ahead of them, so I followed, scared again and not knowing what had broke loose.

"I found out quick enough, for when I got to where I could see our back trail there was two young Blackfeet following it, coming on slow and careful with arrows on their bows all ready to pull. What made them make such a fool break I never could figure out, unless they read the sign wrong from being in a hurry and thought it was made by a lone Crow scout—we'd come across single file—that they could make a sneak on while he wasn't looking; for you can bet no foxy old warrior would have done a thing like that.

"I lay there watching them coming on; shivering all over, for I was new at the killing game those days, and all around me the Crows kneeling behind bushes with their arrows on the bows ready to draw and never moving any more than if they was made out of wood.

"When it came it gave me a jolt. I was looking at the Blackfeet, so close now that I could see the savage look on their faces, all ready to drive their arrows into the Crow they thought they had cornered; then there was a flash, the hum of the bow strings, the Blackfeet sort of wilted down with the feathered end of the arrows sticking out of their chests and the Crows were racing for first coup and the scalps.

"Just as they broke out from the trees another Blackfoot jumped up from where he had been crawling in from the right; the Crows seeing him instantly and wheeling that way, running like greyhounds and jerking arrows from their quivers. The Blackfoot was another youngster—no feathers in his hair—but a brave for all that, for instead of trying to beat the Crows to cover—he was a long bowshot off and had a good chance to make it—he ran straight for the cliff above the village so as to give the alarm.

"As soon as the Crows saw what he was up to they commenced shooting and landed an arrow in his leg that made him stumble, but he reached the top of the cliff, put his hand to his mouth and gave the war-whoop, then whirled around, standing with his heels over the edge so that when he was killed he'd fall and the Crows wouldn't get his scalp, and whipped an arrow on to his bow. He never pulled the string an inch, though, for as he turned the Crows were within shot, a half a dozen arrows went into his body and he went over backward, sounding another war-whoop as he fell.

"Of course that settled it—the alarm given and no chance to get off the butte before it would be surrounded, so the Crows all ran to the edge and me after them.

"The village was boiling. Warriors were rushing out of the lodges, grabbing their weapons off the tripods and running for their horses, women and children scurrying for shelter, scouts racing for lookout points, for though everybody in the camp had heard the warning only a few had seen the young brave fall and the rest didn't know just what was wrong; but the Crows let them know in a hurry.

"They stood out on top of the cliff giving the Crow war-whoop, and not satisfied with that a couple of them ran to scalp the two Blackfeet, coming leaping back to shake the bleeding scalps at them below, screaming the scalp-yell, calling the Blackfeet dogs and cowards, bragging that they'd counted coup on that many already and would on a lot more before they were through. That was redskin all over. The Crows were trapped—not one chance in a thousand to get out alive—so they had to show they weren't afraid.

"Of course that set the camp wild, the Blackfeet yelling back, shaking their weapons and some of them shooting their guns at us, though the smooth-bores wouldn't carry that far, and a swarm of warriors flogging their horses to get back of the butte and climb up. It looked to me as if we had just about an hour before we'd go over the cliff after the young Blackfoot—I could see his body on the slide rock below—but the Crows didn't have any such notion and got ready to make a stand.

"A little ways from where we were the flat top of the butte ran out into a point, sort of flat-iron shape, the end thirty or forty feet beyond the cliff-line, and narrow, twenty feet wide. The ground here was level, no cover close, with a lot of rocks of different sizes scattered around, and the Crows ran out on the shelf and began to pile up a breastwork across it out of the loose stones. You can bet we worked fast, and when the Blackfeet in the village saw what we were doing they howled like a pack of wolves closing in on a deer; the Crows whooping back and telling the Blackfeet to come and get 'em if they had the sand. The Crows were feeling fine—once an Indian starts that kind of a play they sure carry it through in good shape—and I was getting kind of excited myself, perched up there on a sliver of rock five hundred feet or more in the air with a thousand mad Indians raging below, the drums thudding and the medicine-men dancing and shaking their rattles. I went as crazy as the Crows and whooped just as loud.

"In a few minutes most of the warriors that had gone around the butte came flying back, the war-chiefs leading, and bunched up on a hill by the camp where they could get quick action both ways, for it was an old trick to draw all the fighting men away from a village and then jump it, and for all the Blackfeet knew there was a Crow war-party hid somewhere all ready to rush. We could see scouting parties stringing out in every direction on the high jump, and signal smokes began to go up—our little gang was giving the whole Blackfoot nation something to think about, being so bold that way.

"All this time we were piling up rock as fast as we could, for there'd be a crowd up to take us in as quick as they could make the climb, and we hadn't got our wall up more than waist high when a trade-gun whanged away at us out of a bush, the bullet kicking up the dust out in front and whistling over our heads, making us duck for cover. In ten minutes fifteen or twenty guns were blazing at us, the big slugs sending up spurts of dust or smashing into the breastwork, the arrows were coming thick, and all the time the Blackfeet yelling and the Crows answering—it sure made a lively racket.

"If the Blackfeet had rushed they could have gone right over us, for a hundred of them must have come up—there were six or seven hundred warriors in the village—but that isn't the redskin way, for they'd have lost two men for every scalp they'd get, and thought they was cheated. Besides, Indians have got to work themselves up, shooting, yelling and telling how brave they are, before they'll take a desperate chance; and they had us corraled, so what was the use?

"After a while, seeing that they weren't doing any good, the Blackfeet let up and everything quieted down for a spell, then they tried a new game. There was a sort of shallow swale out in front of us that we couldn't see into, and a bunch of them got into that and began shooting arrows high so they'd come straight down—they must of had to lie on their backs to do it or we could have seen them, for we'd left holes in the wall to look through—but they couldn't quite reach us, the range was a little too far.

"If they shot too high the arrows stuck up in the ground out in front, and if they held a little lower and the arrows cleared the top of the breastwork they'd strike about three feet back, so we were all right as long as we hugged the wall close, and you can bet we did. They kept this up till there was so many arrows sticking in the ground that the colored feathers looked like a lot of queer flowers, then they gave it up.

"Of course both sides was abusing each other, the Blackfeet telling the Crows what they would do to them when they caught them, and the Crows asking 'em why they didn't come on and try it; all of 'em calling the other side the worst names they could think of; and then the Blackfeet out in the swale began jumping up into sight and dropping back quick, the idea being to get the Crows to shoot away their arrows, and maybe get hit doing it; but the Crows wouldn't bite—they lay close against the wall and asked the Blackfeet to try something new.

"I was pretty well stirred up myself, what with lying there in the sun near roasted, wanting water awful bad and sure I'd be killed before long anyway; and one Blackfoot that kept coming up in the same place all the time had me considerably aggravated with his yelping. So I stuck my rifle through a hole in the wall, took a bead on a rock in line with where he was, and the next time his feathers showed through the sights let go. He gave a screech and here he came, the blood spurting out of a hole in his chest, waving a war-club and trying to yell, with about thirty more right at his back, their war-bonnets streaming out behind as they came in long leaps, swinging their clubs and hatchets and whooping like devils. I reckon the one I'd shot was a chief and they thought he'd started a charge.

"I scrambled up, grabbing my knife and wondering if I could get it into one of 'em before I had my head split; then I saw the one I'd hit keel over and some more staggering, trying to pull arrows out of their ribs, for the Crows were all up on one knee pouring them in. It was too much for the Blackfeet—before they'd come halfway, maybe forty yards, a lot of 'em were hit—and they whirled and ran back, the Crows going over the wall after them, braining the cripples and jerking off the scalps; an Indian fight at close quarters isn't a nice thing to see.

"When the charge started sixty or seventy Blackfeet ran out of the cover; but they were a hundred and fifty yards away and before they got fairly going the fight was over. If they'd kept on they'd have had us; but they didn't—they stopped and began shooting at the Crows, though all the good they did was to bark four of them a little around the edges, and they came back, crazy with blood-thirst, waving the scalps and calling on the Blackfeet to come on and try it again.

"One of the chiefs, a big man with buffalo horns on the front of his war-bonnet, carrying a white shield with a red hand in the center and a long handled war-ax, stepped out in front at that and started toward us slow, chanting his war-song, and the rest began to string in behind, joining the chant and working themselves up for a rush.

"Once they started there were too many to stop, and it looked like they'd start—the chant was sounding louder and they were forming a spear-head, the chief at the point.

"I was trying to get a bullet down, but it went hard and slow, me with the rifle between my knees jamming the ramrod with both hands, the Crows placing what arrows they had left, and what they'd picked up handy on top of the wall and their clubs with them. They were chanting now, for it sure looked like the death-grapple was coming.

"Then I felt the bullet go home, whipped out the rod, spilled some priming from the horn into the pan and dropping on one knee took a dead rest over the wall, held on top of the chief's head and pulled slow and easy, for if I missed I'd never pull trigger again.

"The smack of the striking bullet sounded perfectly plain above the chanting, and the chief crumpled down, never stirring after he hit the ground.

"That broke the charge like a thing of that kind will with Indians if they think their medicine is bad, and it must have seemed to them as if it was by this time, the way the Crows were having the best of the fight. They froze in their tracks, the chanting stopped, four of them picked up the dead chief and they trailed back into the cover, not hurrying, but they'd had enough and not another shot was fired at us.

"There was Indian nature again. They believed that the Crows had the strongest medicine, better than that of the Blackfeet, and not one of them would move against us until their own medicine-men said that the spell was broken and the time was right.

"Not that they would let us go—there'd be a circle around us, day and night, until we were killed or taken—but for a time nothing would be done.

"With the Crows it was different; their medicine was good, their hearts were brave, and nothing that the Blackfeet could do to them after this would even up the score. One by one they stepped out to the point of rock and standing there counted their coups to those below, the Blackfeet taking it this time without a word. I don't believe any white man, and perhaps no Indian, ever saw the like; the people in the village all looking up, the swarm of warriors sitting their horses with the lance points shining above them, and high overhead the little band of Crows making mock of fifty times their number of deadly foes.

"When the Crows were done they drew back, and after a while some of the Blackfeet that had been on the butte came in sight with the dead chief lashed across his horse, and we could see them telling the story of the fight. Then the women began to mourn, and that was an awful thing to hear, coming from all over the village, for the Crows had seventeen scalps besides the young brave that had gone over the cliff, and the chief.

"Then the crowd of warriors began to break up, for the smokes were telling that there was no enemy within striking distance, and as the sun went down the village settled itself, sullen and watchful, for the night. In the big medicine-lodge the drums were thumping steadily, but outside of that, and the wailing of the women, everything was very quiet, the kind of quiet that scares you, because you know that the devils of hell couldn't be more cruel than the man waiting and watching to have you in their hands for the torture.

"And then the Crows made the coup that has been told a thousand times in their lodges.

"AS SOON as they were sure they wouldn't be seen they cut their buffalo-robes into strings, braided them into a rope with plenty of knots and made ready to go down over the cliff, as cool and easy as if it were a ten-foot drop. As I've said, the jump-off was about two hundred feet straight, with a slope, part slide rock and part solid, for more than twice as far down to the fringe of trees bordering the flat. It was a wild thing to do in daylight, let alone at night with the Blackfeet below and a good chance that some of them would be waiting for just such a thing, but the Crows never stopped—they were sure that their medicine was strong enough to take them through.

"When the rope was finished they picked out a place at the angle of the main cliff with our shelf, fastened the end of the rope around a rock and wedged it fast in a crack where it couldn't be seen easy in the dark if any of the Blackfeet came scouting after we'd left, and the first man stuck his bow through his quiver-sling and slid off. It seemed a long time before his partner, lying flat with his hand on the rope, felt the two jerks which signaled that everything was all right and went over himself. Little Calf followed, then I took a long breath and over I slid, but it wasn't as bad as I'd expected.

"The cliff sloped out enough so that the rope lay against it and by keeping the rock at my back I sort of slid down, using the rope for a brake and losing some hide doing it, for the stone wasn't what you'd call smooth. In a few minutes we were all crouched there on top of the slide rock; wondering if we'd been seen or heard, for it didn't seem possible that the cliff wasn't guarded. There were some big fires going and we could see people moving from lodge to lodge, but none of the talk or laughing you'd usually hear.

"Between us and the village were the dim shapes of the picketed horses, but there was no use trying to get away on any of them—there was bound to be horse-guards laying out in the grass watching. So we started crawling along the foot of the cliff, expecting every second to hear a yell, or a bow-string twang, and one of us get an arrow. But the Blackfeet must have thought that we couldn't get down, for we got clear of the last lodge, struck for the flat and the creek—we were near dead for water and it sure went good when we reached it.

"After that we chewed some dried meat that we had in our belts and lay there in the brush watching and listening. If I could have done what I wanted to I would have been moving for Crow country on the high lope, but the rest had their big coup all planned and I suppose thought I knew what they were up to—an Indian don't talk much in a pinch—but if I had I'd not been resting easy, you can bet on that.

"We weren't more than half a mile from the village, and by midnight, except for the wailing women and the drums most of the lodges were dark and quiet. Then those locoed Crows rose up and headed back for the butte, me trotting along and wishing they were going the other way, being pretty near what you might call fed up with excitement.

"When we reached the trees at the foot of the butte we turned toward the village, sneaking along like a bunch of cats and keeping in the shadow at the edge of the cover. I had expected that the Crows would cut loose a few of the first horses we came to and try to get away with them, but they kept on—they were out for a big killing. The noise that the staked horses made, cropping the grass and moving, covered any sound we made, and we slipped on, stopping every few yards to listen and to watch for any guards moving among the horses. We could just make out the outline of the peaked lodges, and sometimes hear voices, or a child cry, and all the time that never-ending wailing of the women whose men we had killed that day. I never forgot it.

"At last we made the far end of the camp, and when we came abreast the last of the horses the Crows all dropped flat and we crawled out. Little Calf whispered to me to cut the stake-rope of a horse, put a loop on the jaw and be ready to ride, and I could make out the rest doing the same and slashing the ropes of a lot more.

"Then the Crow war-whoop sounded, the ground began to tremble under the drumming of the running feet, and we went down that lane between the lodges and the hill on the dead run, whooping and yelling, with near every horse that the Blackfeet had staked ahead of us, for as the stampede struck them the staked horses pulled the pins and went with the rest, all running like scared coyotes, the ropes whipping their legs and driving them wild.

"As we passed the last lodges the Blackfeet were waking up—you could have heard them five miles—then we were gone, leaving them afoot, and by the time they could see to go out to the herds and have horses to chase us we'd be fifty miles away and still going, for we sure had plenty of fresh changes.

"Even if we hadn't all the horses in the village a small party wouldn't take after us before it was light enough for them to read sign, for the raid, coming on top of what had happened that day, would have them guessing—for all they knew more Crows had come.

"If any of them chased us all they saw was our dust. We pulled into the Crow camps three days after with about four hundred of the best horses the Blackfeet had and leaving them a first-class excuse to raid the Crows the first time they had a chance, for the main fun those two tribes had was pulling off plays on each other like the one I've told about.

SOME ODD GOLD FINDS

by John L. Considine

IN THE pioneer days of California gold was often found under extraordinary conditions.

One day a comely young woman, who had just arrived on the stage from Sacramento, asked the proprietor of the Tremont House at Marysville for the loan of twenty dollars.

"I have just arrived from New York," she explained, "and the journey cost me more than I expected. I want to get on to Downieville, where I have a cousin."

The landlord hardly expected to see the money again, but twenty dollars meant little to him, and he did not like to refuse a young and handsome woman. She got the twenty.

Five or six weeks later she returned and handed him the coin.

"I have had splendid luck," she said. "My cousin built me a canvas house and provided me with a cooking-stove, a long table, and benches, and I went into the boarding-house business. In a few days I had forty boarders, paying me twelve dollars a week apiece. I thought I was doing well. One morning, sweeping the earthen floor, I noticed a glitter. It was gold. The floor was spangled with it. I called my cousin.

"Dinner was cooking, but we put the stove, benches, and table outdoors and began digging. We took out five hundred dollars that day, mostly in nuggets. We have taken out thousands since. This is the first chance I have had to get away."

An even stranger case occurred at Carson's Creek. A highly popular miner died, and his companions decided to solemnize his funeral with unusual ceremony. Among the settlers was a miner who was understood to have been a prominent and powerful preacher in a large eastern city, and he, being called upon, consented to officiate.

The miners assembled, and the ceremonies began—as all ceremonies there began—by all hands taking a drink. The party then proceeded gravely to the place of interment, about one hundred yards from camp. The grave was dug and the body lowered into it. The minister began his prayer, and the miners knelt about the open pit.

The prayer proved to be an extraordinarily long one, and one of the miners, succumbing to force of habit, picked up a handful of earth, which he crumbled between his fingers, letting it trickle away again. Suddenly he saw the glitter of gold, and promptly forgot all other matters. He seized another handful, and examined it earnestly as it passed between his fingers.

The attention of his companions was attracted. Each of his neighbors began to sample the ground, and in a few minutes every man around the grave was likewise engaged. The preacher ceased his prayers.

"Boys, what's this?" he inquired. And, following their example, he picked up a handful of the earth.

"Gold! gold!" he shouted. "The richest kind of diggings! The congregation is dismissed!"

The dead man was immediately taken from his grave and hurried to another with all possible speed, and the miners, headed by the preacher, lost no time in staking out the new diggings.

Arthur Schwieder

EUNAMTUCK THE MAN

by George Bruce Marquis

Author of "The Lost Blue Bucket."

OLD TOOLAPS awoke shivering. Day was beginning to dawn, and as he lay there he could just make out the pole ribs of his teepee slanting up to the smoke-vent at the peak. But no smoke emerged, for he could see the cold sky through the opening as an irregular grey patch and one winking malicious star. Now he turned over and addressed his spouse Shego, slumbering audibly on the farther side of the wigwam.

"Shego," he called in Nez Percé. "Shego!"

He waited a moment, but receiving no answer repeated the attack with sustained vigor. In time there came a slow upheaval of buffalo robes and gaudy blankets and Shego's head appeared, followed by the querulous demand to know the reason for this untimely summons.

"The camp-fire is but ashes," Toolaps informed her with dignity, "and I am cold."

"What hinders," she retorted sharply, "that *you* kindle it?"

But her lord's roving eye had noted a fact that made building even a modest fire impossible for the nonce. There was no fuel in the teepee. He proceeded to put his discovery into diplomatic words.

"It is an ancient custom of our people and therefore a wise one," he observed sagely, "that the women bring the wood and kindle the fire while the men hunt or gather in the council chamber."

But Shego, being a semi-modern reservation dame, was not so easily convinced.

"It may be that it is an ancient custom," she returned, "but it is nevertheless a foolish one. Besides," she added practically, "there is no longer a council chamber and the Great Father at Washington tells it that you do not hunt."

"The Great Spirit has given us the deer and the elk," Toolaps argued stoutly, "and I am tired of the beef of the agency. It is meat for children and for squaws, but not for men. I hunt today."

The argument continued for a time, but in the end Toolaps prevailed. Shego arose fully dressed as she had lain down, for thanks to contact with the lesser shades of civilization Indians no longer slept naked as in the days of their fathers. Stepping over to the flap that did them service as a door, she threw it aside, admitting a frigid inrush of air. She stepped without, and soon the rapid tattoo of her hand-ax came to Toolaps' satisfied ears.

Another arctic gust marked her return, but quickly the fire blossomed up in the dead ashes, and the odor of cooking followed hard upon it.

Breakfast over, the old Indian set about making ready for his projected hunting trip, his wife all the while interposing

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"Eunamtuck, the Man," copyright, 1923, by George Bruce Marquis.

sundry objections, among which Eunamtuck, Chief of the Tillayuma Indian police, bulked large.

"Eunamtuck sits by his teepee fire and dreams," Toolaps declared with fine disdain of the redoubtable chief of police.

"It may be that he dreams," Shego admitted, "but he is also cunning as the fox. Besides the agent has said it, that you do not hunt."

But Toolaps was deaf to her entreaties.

"I hunt," he declared with finality, and slinging an ancient muzzle-loading rifle across his back and picking up the drag rope of a light sled, he left the wigwam.

The sun was sitting astride the jagged peak of Needle Mountain as Toolaps set his face toward the distant hunting ground. Two feet of powdery snow covered the lower Tillayuma Valley, and at every onward drive of the snow-shoe a white swirl arose, till it seemed as if he walked knee-deep in smoke. And it was cold, thirty below at least, without the faintest stir of air, a thin knife-edged chill, that could penetrate any clothing except leather.

However, against the cold, Toolaps was amply fortified and with the comfortable mental observation that it would undoubtedly dampen the ardor of any possible pursuers he pushed ahead with redoubled vigor.

By noon he was well up in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Here the snow was a good six feet deep, but crusted heavily, making progress increasingly easy.

As he pressed along his mind was busy with the great change brought about by the intrusion of the whites, and at times he muttered Nez Percé imprecations against their meddlesome interference with time-honored tribal rights and customs. Especially was he bitter against the recent decree emanating from Washington and presented in a concrete way by the agent at the Flat Dog Agency, that Indians cease to hunt save during certain seasons of the year. Yet would he, Toolaps, son of the great Manniquon, hunt as his fathers had taught him.

So reasoning, he turned his steps into a walled-in valley, where the snow lay ever undrifted, and elk and mule deer were to be always found. His instincts proved unerring, for quite near the lower end of the valley he came upon a band of elk feeding along the banks of the Tillayuma River.

He stalked them without difficulty from the alder-lined banks and brought down a young cow at the first shot. The cow had dropped in her tracks and Toolaps noted with satisfaction that the "pea" bullet had struck her at the fatal spot, just above the center of her forehead.

Now he proceeded to cut off a hind quarter and load it upon his sled. The wolves would doubtless feast that night, which was well. And now a sudden problem gave him pause. To camp out, with the thermometer hovering around thirty below zero, was not a pleasant experience for even a seasoned Indian hunter. At that moment, however, he had a happy inspiration, for he remembered a cave, quite near, too, where he could pass the night in comfort and security. It lay on the right bank of the Tillayuma River, where that stream had cut its way through the wall that hedged in the cove-like valley.

He picked up his drag rope and briskly set his face toward the wedge-like opening scarcely a mile away. His going for that mile was easy, even with his loaded sled, but the minute the walls of the narrow cañon closed in upon him, his task became a different one. Great blocks, of stone, loosed by frost and storm, blocked his way, and at times he was forced to drag his sled along the very lip of the icy ledge, while the river fumed and threatened twenty feet below him. Presently, however, he reached the cave in safety, and drew his sled in through the wide-arched, black throat with a sigh of relief. In the Spring the swirling water of the Tillayuma made it a veritable caldron so that no one could enter it. But it had done Toolaps a good service, for a great pile of drift wood lay along the lower side of the cave, left stranded by the retreating flood.

HE LEANED his rifle against a handy boulder, gathered up a quantity of the wood, now dry as powder, and quickly kindled a fire. This done, he stepped to the flat ledge at the entrance of the cave and looked about. Fronting him, the walls of the cañon towered up at an unbelievable angle, so steep in fact that it seemed incredible that six feet of snow was clinging to its roof-like slope. A breath of air, it seemed to him, could bring it roaring down into the mouth of the cave. Toolaps was well versed in the perils of the dry avalanche, or white slide, and regarded it with somber eye.

"It bodes ill," he muttered to himself, "and yet it may be that the *Manitou*——"

That sentence was never finished, for as he turned and glanced sharply to his right, he saw something that amazed him quite as much as if the dread *Manitou* he had just invoked, had appeared. Standing there, scarce ten feet away was Eunamtuck, the Chief of the Tillayuma Indian Police!

Toolaps did not hesitate for a fractional second even. With one backward spring he repossessed himself of his rifle and the next instant fired pointblank at the smiling intruder. But Eunamtuck was not reputed the quickest man on the Tillayuma Reservation for nothing. To stoop sidewise under the flaming gun, to cover the intervening space in one panther-like leap, and wrest the rifle from its owner's hands were but petty divisions of a single act.

And then, as the two men faced each other, there came a sound from the towering steeps above them that checked all thought of combat—a sound like the hissing of steam from a thousand pistons, transmuted instantly into the combined thunder of a thousand trains. And running through it all was a silken rustling, impossible to describe.

Eunamtuck silently pointed to the opposite slope. The entire snow field seemed to have slipped outward from its almost vertical wall and was rushing with ever increasing velocity down into the V-shaped cañon of the Tillayuma below. Rocks and trees, too, were being torn away to come roaring down on the crest of the white foaming wave of snow.

Toolaps seemed utterly paralyzed by the apalling spectacle, but not so his companion. Grasping the other by the arm he literally dragged him back into the cave. And not a moment too soon, for scarcely had they left the entrance of the cave, than with a crash, utterly beggaring description, the avalanche reached the bed of the river, filled it, and climbed the rocky walls on both sides, burying them and their cave beneath thousands upon thousands of tons of snow and débris brought down in its resistless sweep.

The cave itself was filled with spume and dust driven up from the plunging snow, through which the tiny flame of Toolaps' camp-fire showed with a sickly light as if shrouded under a veil of yellowish mist.

Toolaps was unnerved, but not so Eunamtuck. Stepping over the camp-fire he piled on a half-dozen dry limbs, noting too, with satisfaction that the smoke seemed to be rising toward the top of the cave instead of spreading out. This argued that it was finding its way out through some crevice or natural chimney in the rocks above them. Now he glimpsed the quarter of elk meat on Toolaps' sled, and at sight of it a slow grin overspread his big jovial face.

"We will eat the evidence," he said in Nez Percé, "though it may be that we will save a portion to take with us when we escape."

"What chance is there that we escape?" Toolaps asked sullenly. "Had you not followed like a wolf on my trail, I at least would now be safe."

"And had *you* the wisdom of a wolf," Eunamtuck returned lightly, "*we* would both be safe even now. To fire a gun in the shadow of a snow field such as that, was the act of a child and not of a man."

Toolaps, having no adequate reply to this eminently just observation, held his peace for the time, but the curiosity which lives in the breast of the reputedly stoical Indian finally impelled him to ask this question—

"How comes it," he inquired, "that you be here and not at the agency?"

Eunamtuck's answer was brief and convincing. It had chanced, so he explained, that he had seen Toolaps at Tekoa, the day before, when he was buying lead for molding bullets for his ancient rifle. Knowing Toolaps, the other guessed that a hunting trip was in project, and early that morning he had set out to discover whether he was justified in his surmise. The present situation certainly was proof enough of his acumen. He added the unpalatable information that he would take Toolaps as a prisoner to the Flat Dog Agency when they escaped.

"When we escape!" Toolaps sneered. "It may be that when the Chinook wind and the sun have warmed this valley till Autumn falls, some wanderer may perchance enter this cave and find our bones."

"We be strong and will dig," Eunamtuck answered complaisantly. "What hinders it?"

"Show me the tools," the other replied unconvinced.

For answer Eunamtuck pointed to a small hand-ax tucked in his belt. They would tunnel out, said he using the hand-ax to loosen the snow. The débris from their tunnel would be piled up at the end and sides of the cave.

After calmly elucidating this simple program as if the digging of a tunnel through a conglomerate of packed snow, boulders, and trees for an unknown distance was an every-day occurrence, he suggested that they eat, sparingly it was true, and then sleep.

When Toolaps awoke, he found Eunamtuck bending above the fire, toasting strips of the elk meat. The meal was meager, eked out with a limited amount of coffee and flapjacks, the spoils of Eunamtuck's pack.

After a brief parley it was decided that the best plan was to head down-stream, digging as nearly straight up as possible. Fortunately the cave was big and would in all likelihood furnish plenty of room for the refuse from the tunnel. With these minor details settled, Eunamtuck began the attack.

He found at once that it was like digging in ice, only ice that had the consistency of frozen rubber. Almost immediately too he encountered boulders, small ones it was true, but it forced him to proceed cautiously, for if he broke the hand-ax their condition would be practically hopeless. Yet in spite of the difficulties he made considerable progress at first and in a couple of hours the tunnel was ten feet long. But now the difficulties multiplied, for it became necessary for Toolaps to hold a torch or he might shatter the ax against an imbedded rock. Besides, digging in an ice tunnel furnished problems of its own, for the cold penetrated through his garments soon wet with perspiration which promised rheumatism at an early date.

In time he gave over digging to Toolaps, while he held the torch and carried away the débris. But Toolaps was slow, and besides, when Eunamtuck took up the digging again, he found that the other had narrowed the hole until Eunamtuck's ample body could scarcely be squeezed through it, which compelled a considerable widening before he could go ahead.

Toolaps, moreover, was obsessed with the idea that the effort to escape was useless, that they were doomed by fate to perish in the cave, and his Indian philosophy to accept the inevitable stoically rebelled at the grueling labor and short rations.

Eunamtuck, on the other hand, had accepted and made his own the white man's dictum, that the unconquered will denies impossibility, so that his time was about evenly divided between arguing the point with his stolid companion and doing the bulk of the work. And most of all he was compelled to keep a watchful eye on the slender food supply. He had thought the meat was disappearing faster than their meager meals justified and one night feigned sleep to catch his companion making a foray on their larder. It brought a stern rebuke, coupled with a promise of dire vengeance if it occurred again. Toolaps promptly declared that he would work no longer.

"It is useless," he said doggedly. "The *Manitou* wills it that we perish here."

"Not the *Manitou* wills it, but you," Eunamtuck retorted. "Mindest thou not how thy father, the great Manniquon, escaped from the Bannocks, and he with a leg broken at the knee? Many a time have I heard thee relate it. *He* would not have trembled at the sound of an avalanche. Dig thou wilt, either of thy own will or mine! The way even now grows easy and we near the end of our labors."

Toolaps, grumbling and sullen, did work. There came a time soon, however, when he declared that he was sick, and Eunamtuck gave to him the remnant of the food, and tightening up his belt over his flat belly crawled painfully up the tunnel to its upper end. Sticking his pine torch into a crevice he aimed a blow at the white wall and then another and another. Chunks of snow began to rain down, and presently an extra jar toppled his torch from its improvised holder, leaving him in darkness.

Grumbling to himself, he stooped to find it, but paused, struck with the thought that the tunnel was not entirely black. Hardly daring to trust his senses, he crept down to the cave, sharpened a stout pole, and returned to the upper end. He began prodding with it at the barrier, largely at random. But when he found that he was really able to penetrate the barrier, his attack increased to a veritable fury. His progress became increasingly rapid, and soon, with a joy that cannot be set to words, he withdrew the pole to find that he was actually looking out at a patch of blue sky!

It seemed to him that he could almost crawl through that tiny hole, so great was his elation, and under the spell of that smiling bit of sky he tore at the mouth of the tunnel, till in an incredibly brief time the thing was accomplished. Still he did no more than thrust his great head out into the limpid air before he was fairly scurrying down the tunnel to tell his somber companion that they had won their fight.

Toolaps was asleep by the fire, so first of all Eunamtuck worried up the tortuous channel with the sled and then with the guns and blankets before he waked him. Stooping over he touched the older man on the shoulder.

"Wake, Toolaps!" he cried exultantly. "The tunnel is done."

"Aye, done," the other said wearily. "What of it?"

"We escape," Eunamtuck grinned. "Come."

And lifting Toolaps to his feet he dragged him up into the sunlight.

The sky was blue, and warm light gusts of a Chinook wind stirred the pine-needles with its wonderful touch. The world was indeed fair, and Eunamtuck with a light heart busied himself loading their blankets and guns on the sled, while Toolaps, moody and silent, did not lift a finger to aid him.

The brief task finished Eunamtuck turned to his companion.

"We be ready," he said cheerfully.

But Toolaps did not stir.

"I am sick and hungry," he returned gutturally. "I can not walk."

Eunamtuck looked at him doubtfully for a moment.

"The sled will bear you also, he declared finally, and lifting Toolaps on it, he once more rearranged the load, picked up the drag-rope and set out.

The sun was quartering to their trail, and as he strode along Eunamtuck, the wiliest of men, furtively watched the ever-changing shadow of the sled and its occupant as it danced along the snow at his right. His caution was amply justified, for presently he noted that Toolaps was gradually lifting himself to a sitting position. Next, with cat-like stealth, he drew his rifle toward him, and began raising it to his shoulder. His purpose was evident enough, but the other man forestalled it. A quick leap to one side, coupled with a sharp yank at the taut drag-rope, and he sent the would-be murderer spinning head-first into a snow bank.

Before Toolaps could rise, Eunamtuck stood above him, dark and terrible, and with one powerful sweep wrenched the rifle from Toolap's hands.

"What means it?" he demanded sternly.

"A wolf was crossing the ridge yonder," Toolaps answered defiantly. "What hinders that I kill it?"

"A lie," Eunamtuck said contemptuously, "or if there be a wolf, it is Toolaps."

He deliberated a moment.

"Two times now," he continued deliberately, "you have tried to kill and two times have you failed. A third time there will not be."

With this dictum he drew from his pocket a handful of buckskin thongs and trussed the other up securely, and as securely tied him to the sled.

Toolaps, snarling like a wolf, assailed him with bitter threats to which Eunamtuck gave not the slightest heed, but when satisfied that the work of hog-tying Toolaps had left nothing to be desired in the matter of thoroughness, he placidly set his face once more toward the Flat Dog Agency.

Taking a short cut he reached it late in the afternoon, drew up before his own wigwam, untied his prisoner, and conducted him inside. His wife who had given him up for dead welcomed the return of her spouse with riotous clamor.

"I would eat much," he grinned, "for I have fasted long, and I would loosen my belt once more. Toolaps would eat also."

And eat they did, more like wolves than men, till eating longer became an impossible task. Eunamtuck finally arose, and patted his protuberant stomach with satisfaction.

"We will go to the agent now," he informed the no less gorged Toolaps.

Ross Butlin, the agent, received the redoubtable chief of police as one risen from the dead.

"Where you been, Eunamtuck?" he exclaimed joyfully. "I thought mebbyso you go happy hunting ground."

Eunamtuck turned and regarded the scowling Toolaps with a quizzical gleam in his deep-set black eyes.

"Toolaps an' me been huntin'," he replied, and then in a few sentences in the vernacular he related the happenings of the last ten days, though he made no mention of the other's two attempts on his life.

"Killum elk, huh?" and Butlin turned upon the accused wrathfully. "Mebbyso yo' heap go calaboose long a tam now."

"Me no killum elk," Toolaps retorted. "Eunamtuck say me heap killum, I say me no killum."

"You killum, alright," Butlin answered. "Eunamtuck no lie. You lie Toolaps."

"Dat so?" Toolaps asked coolly. "How you provem me killum huh?" Then he added—

"Mebbyso Eunamtuck saw me killum."

But Eunamtuck shook his head.

"Me no seeum yo'," he answered truthfully.

The admission seemed a fatal one to Butlin, who with dismay felt the crafty Toolaps slipping through his fingers.

Toolaps with glee saw the look cross the agent's face, and with a chuckle he hurled this final shot at the apparently discomfited chief of police.

"Eunamtuck no seeum me," he said triumphantly. "Nobody seeum me. Mebbyso Eunamtuck bringum back elk meat me kill."

"Mebbyso," Eunamtuck grunted complaisantly, and fumbling a moment in his pack he drew out a bulky object wrapped in buckskin and laid it on the agent's table. With tantalizing deliberation he unwrapped the mysterious package to disclose finally the frontal bone of Toolaps' elk and a portion of the skull lying back of it, which Eunamtuck had cut away with his hand-ax.

A little above the middle center appeared the bullet hole as fresh and clean as the day the elk had been killed. He pointed to it.

"Seeum bullet hole?" he inquired mildly.

But the wily Toolaps was not yet trapped.

"S'pose bullet hole alright," he argued. "How yo' know me killum? Mebbyso yo' shootum elk."

IN ANSWER to this eminently pertinent question, Eunamtuck lifted the previously severed frontal piece away entirely, and pointed to the spongy bone lying back of the brain case. Embedded there was a small rounded bullet, somewhat flattened it was true, yet impossible to mistake for anything but the "pea" ball of the old-fashioned muzzle loader. Then he pointed to Toolaps' ancient rifle, while Butlin nodded his emphatic appreciation of the unanswerable demonstration.

"Toolaps gottum only gun like dat on reservation," Eunamtuck added truthfully after a moment. "Him go *calaboose* long a tam now. Yo' bet yo' my life!"

LONG RIFLES

A Four Part Story
Part III

by Hugh Pendexter

Author of "War Wampum," "Over the Rim of the Ridge," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

I HAD come from Fort Du Quesne in distant Ohio, where I had played the Frenchman, to my home town, Alexandria, in Virginia, bringing news to Governor Dinwiddie. For England and France were gambling again—the stakes, the land east of the Alleghenies and the friendship of that onlooker, the Red Man.

True, I was wanted at home for certain ancient debts; for my father, "Brond of the Open Hand," had left only debts for a legacy. Yet in the confusion incident to the impending campaign I passed unrecognized, save that near my old home I met Josephine, my boyhood sweetheart. With her was her fiancé, young Busby. He and I had played Indian-fighting in our boyhood, and he was now with Braddock's army, preparing for the campaign.

Although my message was to Governor Dinwiddie, it was General Braddock who should profit by my news, for he was in command of the English regulars sent to aid the colonies against the French. But General Braddock profited by no man's advice. Not altogether at fault, for recruits and supplies were lacking, he yet failed to grasp the essentials of warfare in this strange land, and clung to the military science as taught by war in Europe.

My reception by General Braddock did not change my first impressions of him. My dark skin—I was ever called "Black" Brond—and my knowledge of the red men have caused me to be taken for a half-indian before now; and my forest-runner's dress did not win me favor in the general's eyes. When I presented a letter from George Croghan and made my report on the weakness of the French at Fort Du Quesne, it made little impression upon him. He bade me go out ahead of the army to secure enlistments among the provincials. Governor Morris secretly gave me a message to Croghan.

Outside the town I found the camp of my friend Round Paw, the Onondaga. My way was ever his, and we struck northward for the Pennsylvania border.

Next morning we came upon Balsar Cromit, a young frontiersman at McDowell's settlement—a man of marvelous strength and great simplicity of mind. By promising him a long rifle we induced him to join us.

Hearing that a clearing-out of witches was taking place at Great Cove, we hastened thither, and succeeded in putting to rout certain settlers who were baiting a young girl and her uncle.

The old man, overcome by shock, died that night; and the girl disappeared, first promising to go to McDowell's mill. But when we came there we could find no trace of her.

The promise of land induced one Simon Flax to join us, leaving his wife to guard their home and children.

Cromit, with his insatiable desire for proving his finger strength, provoked Flax to a "wring."

Their hands met, and fingers grasped fingers. "Go," snapped Flax, jumping all his strength into his big hands.

In a moment Flax was on his knees crying with pain, and defeated.

I DELIVERED my message to Croghan at Will's Creek, where Braddock and his army soon arrived, but were forced to delay ten days awaiting the artillery. The presence of many non-combatants and the illness of many regulars hampered the preparations.

My attempt to instruct a sergeant in woods-fighting antagonized him and I was rescued from punishment as a French spy, by Major Washington, who vouched for me.

"Long Rifles" copyright, 1923, by Hugh Pendexter.

The major feared an ambuscade by the French, and persuaded General Braddock to send me again to Fort Du Quesne as a spy.

In the mean time I rescued a slim youth—as I thought—who was being put upon by a bully, only to learn that it was the girl of Witches' Head—Elsie Dinwold.

Round Paw and I were joined on the march by Balsar Cromit, whose long rifle had been stolen in camp. He was determined to catch the thief.

We found a dead Huron who had evidently been shot by the thief with the rifle and scalped by Black Jack the Indian-hater, who passed us on the march. The trail led us to a cabin surrounded by Hurons attacking under French command. The thief of the long rifle was within.

We made the cabin after some fighting and found Elsie Dinwold again. An attempt to get water brought the French captain upon us, and him I captured alive. The girl fled to the woods.

Beauvais, the Frenchman, I left in Cromit's charge while the Indian and I sought the girl. At nightfall we were accosted by Jacob Hardy—the man of peace—and under his protection we traveled amidst hostile Indians until early morning, when we escaped to a hiding-place.

Near Allaquippa's town a carrier of French belts was robbed by the Onondaga of his wampum and, as a Frenchman and his ally, we entered the town.

A Frenchman whom I had met before, Monsieur Falest, who was on a mission to win over the woman sachem, took me to her. With her was Elsie Dinwold.

Allaquippa refused the belts of the Frenchman and bade me begone when I had rested.

The girl sought French protection and was to go with Falest to Du Quesne.

The Onondaga brought me news that Beauvais had escaped from Cromit, and warned me to leave the village before he could arrive. Three Delawares intercepted my path, and believing me to be French prepared to torture me.

I was tied to a tree with a cord around each wrist.

"HO, FRENCHMAN!" derided the Tuscarora, bending his head close to my face. "Call for the old man across the stinking water to help you. They say the old man you call master is asleep, or sick. They say he has forgotten his children at Du Quesne and that the Ingelishman comes to eat them up."

I rolled my eyes to look at the war-pipe. He caught the glance and leaped to his feet and with a stroke of his ax smashed the stem of the pipe and spat in the bowl. One of the Delawares thrust a piece of the stem into my mouth, cutting my tongue and nearly strangling me. Another thrust the red feathers into my hair.

This play caused inordinate laughter. A young Delaware shrieked that I was not satisfied with smoking the war-pipe, but must eat it. When I had cleared my mouth I demanded to know why they should treat me so. A middle-aged Delaware, who showed the signs of drink less than the others, glared down on me and cried—

"Why did the French Indians make Falling Tree eat fire on the other side of the Great Crossing?" And I remembered the deserted camp and the poor charred wreck in the ashes at the foot of a tree.

"I did not see Falling Tree die," I defended myself. "If a Delaware has been burned then some of the wild Hurons did it. His bones shall be covered with many presents."

"When the Leni-lenape can not catch a wolf they catch a fox," taunted Running Deer.

It impressed me as being very curious that he, a survivor of a nation oppressed and sold into slavery by the English and forced to seek refuge with the Five Nations, should be so bitter against the French.

"Let the Frenchman beg for his life. Maybe his words will be a belt that will open our ears," cried a warrior.

I knew better than to expect them to pay any heed to pleadings. A sign of weakness would give greater zest to their sport. So I clamped my lips together and wondered where the Onondaga could be, and if this lonely spot on the Monongahela was to witness the end of the last of the House of the Open Hand.

I tried to keep my gaze from straying to the small tree where the pipe had hung, for around this, several feet from the trunk, the drunken savages were now heaping dry brush with a top layer of green boughs. The fuel was so arranged that I would be slow in dying. And most grotesquely did they dance as they piled up the brush and made ready the long cord of rawhide which was to tether me to the tree and yet allow me to move about in a futile effort to escape the baking heat.

There were moments when they would have cheated themselves of their entertainment had not the Tuscarora and some of the less drunken Delawares driven back several young fiends who were determined to learn if my head was "hard," and who, in lieu of axes, sneaked up to brain me with heavy rocks.

At last all was in readiness, and I was yanked to my feet and pushed inside the brushwood circle. My hands were tied at my back with the cord running from my wrists to a point on the trunk some fifteen feet above my head.

"Frenchman, tell Falling Tree of the Leni-lenape that we send you to him, that we have covered his bones," called out a Delaware.

"In a few sleeps many Frenchmen will be ghosts and will tell you how the Ingelishman broke off an ax in their heads," jeered the Tuscarora.

His people had been sold as slaves in Pennsylvania, and had been advertised as chattels in the Boston *News Letter*, a treatment that was the real cause of the Tuscarora uprising in 1711!

A hollow booming sound, quickly followed by the splintering of wood, directed all eyes toward the liquor-keg. It was smashed in and behind the log stood Round Paw, the Onondaga, his war-ax half-raised ready for a throw. After the first brief pause the whole pack was racing toward him yelling and screaming, the spilled brandy increasing their drunken fury. But when the Onondaga drew back his powerful arm and sounded the war-whoop of his people there was an abrupt slackening of the charge.

Despite the maddening effect of the brandy the Delawares could not forget the years they had been held in virtual bondage by the Long House. As they came to a halt Round Paw vaulted over the log and advanced briskly to them and imperiously demanded:

"What do our nephews do with the white man? And what part does this Tuscarora have in it? He had better be playing the bowl and plum-and-seed game of his people than to be playing with fire. This is a very bad game for him to play, they say. Why is he on the Monongahela when his people are in the Long House, seated between the Oneidas and the Onondagas? He would kill a man, but I do not see his three wolf-hides raised. (A Tuscarora custom of preparing a place of execution). Is he a wizard to say who shall die among the Delaware? If so, where are the two white rings made on the ground?"

The Tuscarora was silent. A Delaware spoke up, saying:

"Iroquois, we burn a Frenchman, who burned Falling Tree, a Delaware. Our brother's ghost cried for us to cover his bones."

"We will stick the Frenchman's skin full of splinters and set them afire," muttered the Tuscarora.

The Onondaga glanced at me, and I spoke up, declaring:

"Man of the Long House, they would burn me with little fires because I am a son of Onontio. I know nothing of their dead brother, but I have told them I would cover his bones."

"He must burn," growled the Tuscarora, his courage growing stronger.

"Ha! Who speaks? A man without a cabin unless he goes and begs a place between the Oneidas and the Onondagas," sneered the Onondaga. "Will the Leni-lenape, our nephews, let this man say who shall die and who shall live? He does not have a mat to sit on. What will Allaquippa say about it? They say she has a very strong magic for those of her children who burn strangers. She knows she is standing between the French and English. When two strong men run together any one standing between them is hurt."

"We are grandfathers to all people," said the spokesman of the Delawares; and it was plain he and his followers resented Round Paw's characterization of them as "nephews." He continued:

"This man's bones shall be thrown into the Monongahela. Our sachem will not know."

"We have thrown off our woman's dress! We are men!" howled a young warrior.

"You are drunk," grated the Onondaga, giving him a ferocious look. "You will be sober tomorrow and hide in the woods."

Then striding into the group of warriors he lifted his ax high above his head and cried:

"But you say you are men. Good. Then the Iroquois can trade with you. The Long House will buy a life. The Long House has no bag of talk for the Tuscarora, who has no home, but for the Leni-lenape, who say they are men. Ho! They say this Frenchman is a very brave man. They say it takes much wampum to buy his life. Good. Round Paw of the Wolf Clan of the Onondagas, *Hodisennageta*, 'the Name Bearers,' who rule over the Great Council at the ancient town of Onondaga, will give this for the white man's life."

And he sprang to my side and threw six strings of wampum about my neck. His offering greatly exceeded the ordinary price of a life, and what was more significant the strings were composed of purple beads, the six strands being the symbol of the Six Nations, as the Long House was sometimes called now that the Tuscaroras were living under the protection of the New York Iroquois.

The Tuscarora fell back and appeared to be irresolute; for the might of the Long House was that of a solidly established empire, and its hand could reach out and inflict punishment on the Abnaki along the Penobscot, to the villages in the Illinois country and even beyond, to the Cherokee cabins on the Tellico.

Then again six strings of purple beads were used in opening the grand federal council at Onondaga. To employ such a cluster in buying a prisoner was most unusual. Because of these facts the Tuscarora was shaken in his courage. The effect of Round Paw's words was accumulative. When I saw him giving ground I believed my troubles were ended. The Delawares, however, still rankled under the recollection of many years of subserviency, and my hopes received a sad tumble when the leader of the band violently declared:

"No! The time when the Leni-lenape had to pay wampum to the Long House, or sell land when the Long House ordered, is like water that flowed down the Monongahela many moons ago. It is gone by. This Frenchman is our prisoner. If the Tuscarora no longer wishes to fill his skin with pine sticks then the Delawares will show you how to roast a white man. Light the brush."

Several men ran whooping to the small fire and snatched up burning sticks. The Onondaga sounded his war-whoop and sprang after them, bowling them over. He leaped over the brushwood and with one blow of his ax severed the cord that hitched me to the tree. Then he faced about and made ready to hurl his ax, his terrible cry sending a pulsating, blood-curdling note ringing down the dark aisles of the forest.

The Leni-lenape were ever a proud people. To be intimidated by my friend was to recall their previous years of inferiority. The excitement of the moment had cleared their heads of the brandy fumes and had left them in a deadly mood. Thus far the Onondaga had treated them roughly because of his ax and their lack of weapons. They began crying for the guards to find and bring in their arms, and two warriors dashed into the woods. I begged Round Paw to sever the cord around my wrists. Behind me a voice said—

"Let it be told when the Onondaga man speaks before the great council at Onondaga." And my wrists were free.

I jerked about in time to see the Tuscarora scuttling into the woods, probably an outcast from Allaquippa's town because of his act.

"We must run for it!" I yelled to Round Paw, who was hurling defiance at the Delawares and begging them to show themselves to be strong men and not afraid to die.

"Run from our nephews who have said they were women?" he scornfully shouted, and he danced more wildly along the barrier of brush and swung his ax in glittering circles.

"Ho! ho! They say two brave men are ready to die. Come and kill them," he defied.

The two guards now burst from cover with their arms heaped high with bows and arrows, knives, war-clubs and axes. And there were two smooth-bore guns among the weapons. One of the fellows whom Round Paw had knocked over by the fire had secured possession of my long rifle and was preparing to fire it. Only the zeal of another warrior, who sought to aid the first, saved me from being killed by my own gun. As it was the bullet passed within an inch of my head.

"Run for it!" I yelled at my frenzied companion.

But even as I urged this I knew we could never reach the forest without having our backs feathered with arrows and our heads stopping shrewdly-flung axes.

"What now?" What now? What foolishness is this? Are my children wicked? Have they forgotten what the star has told them? Oh, you foolish ones!"

There was no mistaking that stentorian voice. The tall figure of Hardy, the eccentric, now clothed in a long robe of white and yellow, strode into the opening and with no appearance of haste took a position between us and the Delawares. Then did the Onondaga behold a greater influence at work than had been exerted by the purple symbol of the all-powerful Long House.

YOUR deliverer asked for no explanations after his first queries; the physical evidence was sufficient. Before any could answer his words of reproach he raised a hand and thundered:

"You are drunk. You have forgotten your sachem, the woman of peace. You have forgotten my words of wisdom and would kill yourselves by killing an unarmed man. Go back to your village and sleep off the evil dream, or the star in my head will tell me to do that which no man of the Leni-lenape will ever think of without trembling. Begone!"

And like frightened children the half-sobered wretches slunk into the forest and vanished.

"We thank you, father, for your assistance," I told him.

"*Arendiouanen!*" muttered the Onondaga.

"Did we all dress in the morning robe of purity and in the evening robe of peace there could be no violence, no bloodshed," he remarked, rather absent-mindedly and without looking at us.

"How came you here at Allaquippa's town?" I asked.

"She is a woman of peace. I have been here many times. I have visited her village when it was on the Allegheny. My star told me the French would try to turn her warriors into a war-path. I came to hold them to peace. Go back to the village. You will not be harmed."

He walked into the woods bordering the river and proceeded toward the village. The Onondaga retreated by the path over which he had trailed me, but before departing he secured his wampum and concealed it under his blanket, and I picked up my rifle and loaded it.

"Where did you get the beads?" I asked him as we slowly followed the path.

"From the war-belt and strings the dead Huron carried. Some of the strings had many purple beads; those were a talk from Pontiac. It took time to make them into six strings, all purple. That was why I was slow in finding my white brother. The tall white man has strong magic. If he helped the French the Swannocks would be whipped."

I had never thought of that, and I was glad the eccentric was at least a man of peace and not a partisan for the French; for his influence over the red men was very strong.

I asked for news of Beauvais, and he took his time in informing me.

"He is at the village and starts for Du Quesne after one sleep."

"Tomorrow morning," I murmured.

"The witch-woman and the other Frenchman start to-night. Allaquippa has told the Frenchman to go. She is angry because he brought milk to the Leni-lenape. A hunter told me this. Your brother has not been to the village."

"Then I must wait out here in the woods until Beauvais has taken the Du Quesne path," I decided.

"I will be eyes and ears for my white brother," he assured me.

He turned from the trail and found a snug hiding-place within pistol-shot of the village and said for me to remain there while he procured food. He was confident Beauvais would not recognize him among the other warriors, especially as he would be wrapped from head to moccasins in his blanket.

It was dreary waiting and yet I was glad to be alone as I had a grave problem to solve. Beauvais must not betray me at Du Quesne; therefore, Beauvais must not reach the fort. To waylay him and shoot him from ambush was not within my scruples. I did not mind the death of the Huron carrier of belts, but to kill a white man in cold blood was another matter. Perhaps the Onondaga had felt the qualms I was now experiencing. Yet he was bloodthirsty enough. So far as I could make up my mind it must be a fair fight, yet one to the death. There was rather a fine question as to my right to endanger my own life when so much might depend upon what I learned at Du Quesne. There were too many settlements and too many women and children beyond the blue wall, too many isolated cabins along the Rea's Town and Shippensburg road, to run even a shadow of a risk of failing. And yet in the end sportsmanship won, and I was committed to giving Beauvais an even chance.

As it grew dark and the fires in the village were lighted I left my hiding-place and crept to the edge of the forest to watch for the Onondaga's return. I had not been there long before two figures suddenly came up to the mouth of the path and entered the black cover within a rod of where I was crouching. Their coming took me by surprize, so noiselessly did they move and I had barely glimpsed them when they were in the forest. Their identity was established by a young voice saying:

"I was willing to go back and try the English again even if they have been mortal cruel to me, but it couldn't be that way.

So, mister, I'll try the French. They ain't silly enough to believe in witches, I hope."

"No, no, *mademoiselle*. Once they see you properly attired they will say you are beautiful. You will be very happy with the French."

Half an hour later the Onondaga brought to my hiding-place a kettle of meat and a gourd of water. The kettle he had stolen from the cabin of a drunken warrior.

"The witch-woman and the Frenchman are on the path to Du Quesne," he added. "They will be far on their journey by morning."

"Round Paw must have the ears of a wolf when the sun comes back. The other Frenchman must not reach Du Quesne," I told him.

"Yo-hah! My white brother is very wise, like the owl. They say a Frenchman will die very quick after the next sun shines upon him. The wolf's ear will be open and his teeth are very sharp."

CHAPTER VI

DUBIOUS FARING

IT WAS dark in the woods when I awoke and I was weighted down by the realization that I must halt a brave man and kill him, or be killed by him. The Onondaga came to his feet and proceeded to build a fire under the kettle of cooked meat so that I might have something hot to eat before entering upon my strange duel. And he chanted a new song he had improvised in honor of the bloody work ahead of me. Two wolves were howling, he sang, and smelling of fresh tracks. Two wolves were hunting, he continued, their jaws slavering to make a kill. A white and a red wolf were running side by side, his barbarous song told me, and the prey was in sight.

I spoiled his vocal efforts by speaking up and declaring that he was to have no part in the morning's grim work. It required some minutes to win him over, for his red mind could not comprehend why a man should scorn an advantage when attacking an enemy. He feared French witchcraft was at work, for why abandon a certainty and foolishly risk life? The one result desired was the death of the Frenchman before he reached Du Quesne. And there were two of us to give him his quietus. He consented to leave the issue to me only after I said that my *orenda* told me in a dream I must make the fight single-handed. Then he praised me, softly crying:

"Yo-hah! They say my white brother is a very brave man. Ho! ho! He has dreamed of blood. He is a very fierce man. He is a white wolf. The red wolf will keep away until the fight is ended. But if the white wolf does not come back then will the red wolf smell out the tracks. If the white wolf can not go to Du Quesne neither shall the French wolf."

It seemed unfair to make Beauvais fight twice to gain an open road, yet even with me dead, Braddock's need would be urgent. It would never do to allow Beauvais to relate to his superiors what he had seen and heard among the road-builders.

The army was sick and moving very slowly. Every stray Indian, whether French, English or neutral, knew that much; but the red man's reports were not fully trusted. Ten minutes of talk by a French officer would have more weight at Du Quesne than all that an Indian could talk into twenty belts. If I lost the fight and if it were permitted me to continue cognizant of earthly affairs I knew I should feel sorry for any man who had the Onondaga trailing him. So I could not say "no" to my red friend; and small good such a prohibition would have done should the morning's meeting go against me.

I ate a little warm meat and smoked my pipe while the Onondaga scouted the edge of the woods. At last he was back on the run, warning:

"He leaves the village. It is only half-light even in the opening, but the Wolf man's eyes are very sharp. He will pass along the patch where you met the Delawares. He carries a long gun like my brother's."

"Round Paw of the Wolf Clan, you must tell me you will not take part in this fight so long as I am alive," I said to him.

He sighed regretfully and sullenly replied:

"This is the first fight between the French and English where the red man is not wanted. My brother shall take the scalp alone."

He was a pagan and I claimed to be a Christian, yet the only difference between us was my ability to feel ashamed for doing something I was fully determined to do, whereas he would feel proud and happy. I envied him his mental attitude while I hastily kneeled by the fire and examined my rifle and hung my ax in my belt.

I moved on a long diagonal that would cut the path at the point where the three Delawares and the Tuscarora had made me a prisoner. The spot was far enough from the village to prevent any alarm being given did we fight with rifles; and the hour was too early for any Delaware hunter to be abroad. I was forced to proceed slowly as but little light had yet penetrated the thick growth. The light was a little better when I reached the path, quite sufficient for revealing a human figure at the limited range allowed by the forest. I kneeled beside the path and examined it as best I could and decided no one had passed over it that morning.

The Frenchman was taking his time and with never a thought that his advance would be disputed. Some ten minutes passed, and I was finding I could see quite distinctly as far as the first bend in the trail, when the calm of the woods was shattered by two rifle-shots a second apart. Cursing aloud I leaped to my feet and glared down the path in the direction of the village.

The Onondaga had been unable to resist his racial instincts and had cut in ahead of me. Even in my anger I was amazed that he should have done this, for, red or white, there was no man whose word I would accept ahead of the Onondaga's. I could only explain it by believing the Indian had betrayed himself by some bit of carelessness. The two shots, so close together, proved the Frenchman had not been caught off his guard; but which of them had fired the last shot? Five, ten minutes lagged by, and I should have started an investigation if not for the sound of footsteps. One man was coming up the path on the run, and any finicky notions I had had about slaying the Frenchman vanished on my discovering this man was white. No Indian would run as did this fellow.

I had no time to lament over Round Paw's passing out, for in another moment the fellow would be turning the bend a few rods away. His gun would be empty, I believed, and I stood my rifle against a tree and pulled my ax. Then the steps reached the bend, and the next second a tall figure was bearing down upon me. Lifting my ax I leaped into the path and cried:

"Halt, *monsieur!* This path is closed."

With a squawking cry the fellow came to a halt, and it was Cromit's voice that drawled:

"Lor's law! If it ain't Brond! I'm mortal glad to see you, mister."

For the first time I noted he was carrying his long rifle, an ample identification in a stronger light.

"Balsar Cromit!" I exclaimed in an undertone. "Get into the bushes here, quick! There's a man coming I have business with and you'll spoil the game. How the —— did you come to be ahead of the Frenchman?"

He did not offer to leave the path, but grinned widely and replied:

"I proved to be the better man. So I passed him."

"You saw him? Beauvais, the Frenchman?" I gasped.

"He was behind a tree. I offered him fair fight with empty hands and the varmint tried to shoot me. We fired 'bout the same time, but it was my lead that done the tickling. When he slipped away from me at the road-builders' camp and sneaked off with a feller's rifle I vowed most vastly I'd fotch him back, or give him his everlasting needings."

"You fought with Beauvais? You shot him?" I dully asked.

"He's feeding the fishes in the Monongahela now. He was hiding on the bank near the path. There wa'n't much light to speak of. I heard a rustle and called out to him. I felt he was going to shoot and had my rifle ready. *Bang! Bang!* And it was all over for him. Didn't know how the Injuns at the village would take it if they l'arned I'd killed him, so I tucked some rocks in his clothes and heaved him and the stolen gun into the river. It was a most fetching rifle. Hated like sin to heave it in."

"You've killed Beauvais the Frenchman," I repeated, hardly able to realize this sudden turn in affairs, and yet selfishly glad that the disagreeable task had not fallen to me to perform.

"He's just as dead as he ever can be. But he fired first. Only chance he had. Ding him for not giving me a real wring! He's at the bottom of the river. I ran most mortal to git clear of the village if any Injun happened to hear the guns. I was thinking on circling back and entering from t'other side just like nothing had happened that I knew of. Lawful life! But I'm glad to see you."

"Hush! Here comes another with a light step. This man will be red."

Cromit followed me to one side behind some sugar-trees. But as the newcomer turned the bend the increased light permitted me to recognize him on first sight. I relaxed my arms and whistled softly. Round Paw came down to a walk and without any hesitation swung off the path and joined us. When he beheld Cromit he grunted a soft "Yo-hah!" but otherwise showed no surprize.

"The bone-breaking man killed the Frenchman and threw him into the river," he announced. "The Wolf man did not know which was in the river till now. The bone-breaker's *orenda* was very good to him."

"Ding him mortally!" exploded Cromit, his eyes frowning. "I wouldn't take his parole at night and he slipped the rawhide and stole the gun and ducked out. I've trailed him night and day. He must have known I was after him for he hid his signs most 'mazingly. Once, yesterday morning it were, he held back and took a long shot at me. I see him for just a second, but couldn't hit him. That's the only time I saw hide or hair of him till I found him beside the trail back there."

"We will swing back and enter the village from the south," I said. "Did any one see you follow him from the village?"

He chuckled and explained:

"I ain't been in the village. Once I'd trailed him into it I came 'round to this side and waited for him to come out. I knew he'd be in a sweat to make Du Quesne. No village Injun has seen me at all."

My mind was greatly relieved. I still adhered to my plan of entering the village from the south, but with Cromit appearing for the first time and with Beauvais hidden in the river, Allaquippa's Delaware would know nothing of the bloody business and the road to the fort would be open to me. I proposed taking the Onondaga with me to act as express while Cromit remained in the village to relay my report back to the advancing army.

So we swung away from the path in a wide circle, the Onondaga scouting ahead to prevent our walking into any Delaware hunters. And as we traveled Cromit told me of the things he had heard and the conditions he had observed during his brief stay at the camp of the roadbuilders.

I CONDENSE his rather voluble account and its wealth of colloquialisms. Captain Jack, the wild hunter of the Juniata, and his men had offered their services to Braddock at Will's Creek, only to be told they must be under military discipline. The martinet had held to his decision and the truly formidable band had returned to the forest.

It is not given to any man to know how history would read had those bold and cunning rangers been received on their own terms; but I, for one, will always believe the result would have been different. Braddock did not leave the creek until his entire force was in motion, and I could imagine how his fiery spirit must have chafed over the many delays.

Halket and his division had started on the seventh of June, Gates with his division on the following day, and Dunbar—destined to be known as "Dunbar the Tardy"—on June tenth.

The army had moved at a snail's pace, Five miles had been a good day's march. Some days only half that distance had been covered. The road extended over steep mountains and through ancient forests. Because of the artillery and the many wagons it was necessary to halt and build bridges over the many creeks and make a passable road through every stretch of swamp. It resulted that the wagons and pack-horses were strung out to a most dangerous length. Could the French have led their Indians beyond the Little Crossing it is my belief the army would never have reached the Great Crossing.

At the end of the first day's march it was found necessary to lighten the wagons and horses and to send a part of the artillery under fifty men back to the creek. The officers, by sending back a portion of their personal luggage, were able to contribute a hundred extra horses to the pack-train. General Braddock and his aides gave twenty more by a similar sacrifice.

At the outset much time and labor were lost by Major Chapman's crossing over

Will's Mountain in search of a roadway. It had been found necessary to send twenty-eight soldiers' wives to Philadelphia and allow only two to remain with each company. Such an amazing situation! Soldiers setting forth into an unknown country accompanied by their women folks! This fact alone bore witness to the regulars' ignorance of what lay before them.

The steady salt diet had brought a general sickness to the army. I was especially sorry to learn that Major Washington, a veteran in western travel, had been ill for several days. The army had used up ten days in making the Little Meadows, a distance of from twenty-five to thirty miles, a good day's travel for such men as Gist and Croghan.

At that camp a council of war had been held by the commander and all staff officers. Again the personal baggage was reduced, and twelve more horses were added as pack-animals. At that council Major Washington had boldly urged a rapid forward movement with the light division, leaving the heavy troops to come up as best they could. Unfortunately his rank did not permit him to do more than advise, although his opinion was sought by Braddock.

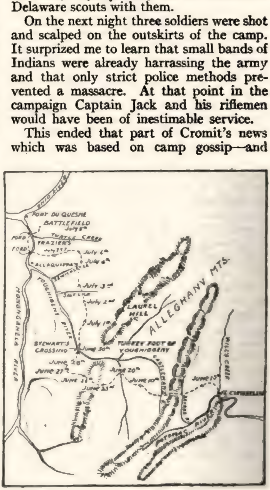
It was decided at this council that St. Clair, with four hundred men, should go ahead to hurry up the road work, with Braddock, Burton, Halket and Sparks following two days later with eight hundred picked men. This decision gave great offense to Colonel Dunbar who, with Chapman and others, was left behind. Thus we had not only sickness in the army but, also, ill feeling and jealousy.

From the Little Meadows camp the army took along four howitzers, four twelve-pounders, twelve cohorns,* thirteen artillery wagons, seventeen ammunition wagons, and a pack-train of provisions. On the day Braddock left the Meadows he announced he would reach Fort Du Quesne not later than June twenty-eighth. But although it was only seventeen miles to the Great Crossing this portion of the march was not covered until June twenty-fourth, making five more precious days consumed.

Truth of it was the entire army was forced to mark time at the heels of St. Clair's tree-choppers. During this discouraging delay three Mohawks came into camp with what purported to be the latest news from Du Quesne; but they vanished that very night, taking one of Braddock's Delaware scouts with them.

On the next night three soldiers were shot and scalped on the outskirts of the camp. It surprized me to learn that small bands of Indians were already harrassing the army and that only strict police methods prevented a massacre. At that point in the campaign Captain Jack and his riflemen would have been of inestimable service.

This ended that part of Cromit's news which was based on camp gossip—and later I found it to be substantially in accord with the facts. It was obvious that the army was sick and dispirited, and that the provincials were filled with forebodings as they daily looked for a fight in the woods while being tied down and hampered by absurd military restrictions. This gloomy bearing on the part of men supposed to know the ways of the Indian discouraged the regulars. Gossip also had it that Braddock would not speak to Dunbar or Halket except in the line of routine.



What was another inexplicable piece of folly was Braddock's failure to utilize Croghan's forty Iroquois warriors on the march. It seems that Colonel James Innes, governor at Fort Cumberland, did not wish to have any of the sixty Indian women and children left under his care during Braddock's absence. He assured the commander that eight Indians would suffice as scouts and that the rest should be directed to take their families away from the creek.

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*A small, military howitzer with two handles, by which it may be carried short distances.

Why General Braddock should have listened to such ruinous advice is beyond any forest-runner's comprehension. Up to the time the Onondaga and I left Will's Creek it had been the commander's great desire to have as large a body of Indians accompany him as possible. He completely reversed his judgment and agreed with Innes that eight would be enough.

It was to Captain Hogg's camp of road-builders, slightly in advance of the body under Sir John St. Clair, that Cromit had taken Beauvais. While in the camp he had been impressed by the great fear of the men. They considered it miraculous that my companion should succeed in bringing a French prisoner through the enemy's savages and into the camp.

Although he assured them that no Indians were then lurking about the camp they were very loath to separate from each other, or to penetrate more than a short distance into the woods. False alarms were repeatedly being given, all of which slowed up the work of hewing out the road for Braddock.

Their spirits were further depressed by wild rumors. Whence came the fantastic reports it would be hard to guess. But daily, said Cromit, some startling bit of misinformation was whispered up and down the line and talked over around the fires at night. Du Quesne had received reinforcements of a thousand regulars and two thousand Indians! Braddock was sick and likely to die! The army was growing mutinous and demanding to be led back to Will's Creek! As fast as the falsity of one rumor was proven another, equally as grotesque and disquieting, took its place.

While in the road-camp Cromit had met Christopher Gist, veteran of the Ohio country, who was now acting as a scout for Braddock. On learning that Cromit was to report back to me, could he find me, Gist had supplied him with many of the facts relating to the departure of the army from the creek and its faring as far as the Great Crossing.

"And that just about empties my skull," said Cromit in finishing his long recital. "I've walked soft and easy so's not to jolt anything out of my poor head. And 'tween you and me and the Monongahela that Gineral Braddock will lick himself before the French have a chance to have a wring with him if he ain't mighty careful. If he'd send six or eight hundred riflemen ahead and turn back all his big guns and wagons we'd have Du Quesne in two shakes of a dog's tail. But what with their uppity ways, and their drums whanging out the long roll for a halt and beating the long march for the march, the French will die of old age in waiting for us to show our heads at the forks of the Ohio."

"No matter how slow the army is in coming it will reach the fort," I told him. "The French are whipped already."

He said nothing to this, and for once I found the grin missing from his homely face. I explained my plan for him to wait in Allaquippa's village and to be ready night and day to carry to the army any news that the Onondaga might bring in. The program did not please him, but his visit to Hogg's camp had impressed him with a fear that all was not going well with our cause, and he was much more amenable to reason than formerly. Also, perhaps, his wayward spirit had learned some meekness as a result of his prisoner's escape. I knew he must have been negligent in his watch over Beauvais; but the porridge was spilled and there was small comfort in upbraiding him.

ROUND PAW was waiting for us at the southern end of the village. To relieve Cromit from possible annoyance should he be seen in the company of an avowed supporter of the French we agreed it was better for the Indian and I to enter the village together, while he held back for an hour. When he next saw us he was not to recognize us.

Repeating my instructions, and reminding him that he would be favorably received as a scout for the colonies, the Onondaga and I swung into the path and made for the cabins. Having already been guests in the village we did not go through the formality of shouting our names. We were taken aback to be met just beyond the first cabin by Allaquippa herself. She was escorted by six warriors, and these barred our path.

Without any of the Indian's usual deliberation the woman spoke up and informed us—

"There is no place here for French brandy or French belts."

"We carry neither brandy, nor belts, Allaquippa," I replied.

"There is no mat here for a Frenchman to sit upon."

This abrupt dismissal spoke well for her loyalty to the colonies, but I had my rôle to play, and incidentally I was very hungry.

"There must be a small piece of meat for me and my red brother. A sleep ago there was a stake and Delawares wishing to roast me."

"My children were drunk on French brandy. Had you roasted it would be the brandy that lighted the fires," she sullenly retorted.

"After we have eaten and mended our moccasins we will go away."

It was not to her liking, but custom and usage compelled her to give us food and allow us time to prepare for the journey.

"Eat and make your feet strong for the Du Quesne path," she said.

The Onondaga looked after her as she walked away with her men and muttered—

"That woman should be the mother of chiefs."

He had his nation's respect for child-bearing women, for no chief of the Iroquois was selected, and no important step was taken by the Long House, without the cooperation of the matrons. This deference to the sex is also a notable characteristic of the Cherokees, surely an early proof that a nation is strengthened by the mothers' participation in its government.

We went to the cabin set aside for strangers and were promptly served with meat and a coarse bread. It was evident that Queen Allaquippa did not wish us to delay our departure. We did not propose leaving, however, until Cromit had put in an appearance. News forwarded from Du Quesne would be useless unless the McDowell's Mill man was waiting to carry it to the army. I believed I could safely count on the Onondaga to play the part of express as far as the village, but beyond that I feared he would not go. There were too many French Indians in the woods between the mouth of the Youghiogeny and Braddock's crawling army with whom he would wish to match wits, and against whom he would be sure to try his ax. Before departing for the fort I had to satisfy myself that Cromit would not be refused shelter in the village; so we ate our meat leisurely and fought the minutes.

Having finished and wiped our fingers on little bundles of dried grass I proceeded to mend my moccasins. The awl, hitched to my bullet pouch, a small roll of buckskin, and some deerskin thongs, or "whangs," were spread out before me. After I had made my foot-gear as good as new I advised the Onondaga to take his time. Twice during this repairing a Delaware thrust his head in the door and scowled blackly on observing our lack of haste.

When I believed an hour had elapsed I peered through a small hole at the end of the cabin and beheld Cromit striding from the woods. He halted and shouted the guest call and was promptly confronted by several warriors. They talked with him for a few moments and then gladly shouted:

"Ingelishman! Ingelishman!"

They seized his hands and patted his shoulders and in hospitable pantomime waved their arms and pointed toward the cabins.

He entered the village and the word was rapidly passed that he was "Ingelishman;" and where we had received scowls and frowns he beheld nothing but beaming countenances. He wandered about and passed our cabin and beheld us but gave no sign of recognition. A warrior must have informed him that we were French in our sympathies for he paused and made derisive gestures at us, whereby the savages laughed in great enjoyment. I was afraid the audacious rascal would challenge us to a fight, or play some other trick. Now satisfied his welcome would be permanent I picked up my rifle and stepped outside.

Allaquippa came walking toward us. Behind her walked Hardy, the eccentric. The queen had come to learn why we were not leaving, but on beholding us ready to depart she halted so as not to have any speech with us. Hardy continued approaching and called out:

"You are about to take the path of blood, not peace. Peace and happiness can not be yours until you wear the morning robe and the evening robe."

He gave no sign of ever having seen us before, but I feared he might remember the night he visited our camp and rescued us from the French Indians, and recall that on that occasion I was a colonial. I caught Cromit's eye and frowned and turned my head aside as if wishing to avoid Hardy's gaze. The Onondaga drew his blanket over his head and also turned away.

"You are children of violence," thundered Hardy, stepping after us.

I gave Cromit another glance, an appeal that he understood without knowing my reason. In a moment he was standing beside Hardy, his wide mouth grinning prodigiously, his eyes glowing with the lust for battle. He held Hardy's attention further by placing a hand on his arm and loudly proclaiming:

"You be most vastly powerful, mister. You be a mighty strong man in your hands, mister."

"Peace, child," rebuked Hardy, his gaze wavering and no longer scanning us. "If I am stronger than other men it is the star in my head that gives me the strength."

"I don't know about that," was the truculent reply. "But I'd be mortal proud to have a wring with you. My hands git to aching for wanting a strong man to try busting 'em."

And he held them up before Hardy's face, and closed and opened his fingers.

"You have strong hands, my son, but you have no star in your head," mildly said Hardy.

"They're stronger then yours be, mister," challenged Cromit.

"Yo-hah!" softly cried the Onondaga, pausing and peeping through his blanket. "Now will the man who breaks bone have his belly filled with fighting."

Hardy frowned slightly, as if not quite understanding what Cromit meant. He had had a purpose in following us and he was trying to remember it, but the two hands, closing and opening before his face kept his wits scattered. He frowned slightly and said:

"I wear the morning robe. I am a man of peace. What does my son want?"

"I'm wanting you to be neighborly enough to give me a grip with those big hands of yours. My hands is gitting sick for the need of a good gripping."

And he wriggled his long fingers invitingly.

"Thou foolish one," sternly rebuked Hardy. "You drive from my head something I would say. Would you have me crush your hands until you can no longer handle the weapons of war?"

"Now, mister, you make me feel good. I've hunted all over Pennsylvany for a strong man. I was just giving up all hope. I was thinking I'd have to go to Virginny. Just a little wring to cure my hands of the sickness. Like this——"

And he crossed his wrists with his hands open, so as to take Hardy's hands in a double grip, right to right and left to left.

Hardy stared at him blankly at first, then with reason in his gaze.

"Let it be so," he rumbled. "But the hand that takes mine in a trial of strength must be well-nursed before it swings an ax again."

"Lawful love! But you do tickle me mightily," cried Cromit, his voice now taking on the whining note I had learned to associate with his lust for hand-gripping.

Hardy crossed his wrists and slowly clasped Cromit's hands and asked—

"When do we begin our trial of strength, my son?"

The Onondaga and I should have been hurrying into the forest, but neither of us could stir a foot.

"Now!" rejoiced Cromit beginning to close his fingers.

"You are but a youth and yet I must forget, and treat you as the world would treat you," sighed Hardy. And while he was speaking I saw Cromit's expression change to one of surprize. He said no word, but Hardy's even voice continued, only now he spoke in the language of the Leni-lenape, saying:

"And let my red children see how mighty is peace in overcoming those who seek strife. So shall it be with the Long House and all those red nations who live by the ax."

Cromit's eyes were bulging. The veins stood out on his neck; and by the way he came up on his toes and pushed down his arms I knew he was calling up every ounce of his terrible power. Hardy did not change his position, nor move a muscle that I could observe and his face was as serene as the morning sky.

"Some men learn truth by living and suffering because of their errors," he placidly murmured and now talking in

English. "And some must die before they learn truth. And there can be no truth where there is no peace."

Blood was already trickling down between their clinched palms. Cromit stood it for a moment longer and then, as if struck on the head with an ax, dropped to his knees.

Instantly Hardy had slipped an arm under him and had lifted him to his feet, and was turning him around so that the staring Delawares could not see the signs of weakness in his face. Cromit groaned:

"First time color was ever squoze from my grippers. But I've l'arned the trick of it. Next time I'll do the squozing."

A boy's ranting, for the time would never be when he could master the eccentric.

"The man who breaks bones is a very strong man, but he can not fight against a wizard," muttered the Onondaga.

"And it's time we were deep in the forest, red brother," I whispered.

So interested were the Delawares in watching the two white men, and so concerned was Hardy over Cromit's aching digits, there was no one to waste glances on us as we entered the Du Quesne path.

That day we advanced with great caution and made slow progress. It was the back trail that held our attention. Hardy's influence over the Delawares was great, but the woman sachem had publicly dismissed us from the village and denied us the right of sanctuary; and no one can tell what whims the red nature will develop. More than once we drew to one side of the path and waited to learn if we were pursued.

ALL timber originally crowding against the fort had been leveled for a considerable depth. Vast cornfields stretched for a fourth of a mile up the Allegheny and the Monongahela. In addition to these there were many kitchen-gardens along the Allegheny. On the Monongahela there were a number of mills.

We struck the clearing at a point opposite the eastern gate, a rather pretentious portal of ten feet in width, swinging on hinges and having a wicket in the middle. Inside the stockade were two storehouses, or magazines, as many barracks, a guardhouse and prison, the commandant's residence and the chapel. All these were very stoutly built of heavy logs and backed up to within three feet of the stockade, the intervening space being packed with earth, and the board roofs at the eaves lying level with the ramparts. There were no pickets, nor pointed palisades, and from our position it looked as if the whole enclosure was roofed over.

On my former visit the fort had been defended by three- and four-pounders, five of which were on the northwest bastion to protect the powder magazine. The bastion faced on a large cornfield and back of it were bark huts to accommodate the soldiers when the barracks were filled.

A band of Ottawas passed within a few rods of us, making into the forest. They were not armed for a scouting expedition and had come to sing medicine-songs and indulge in other pagan rites to strengthen their hearts. Other Indians, alone, and in groups, were coming and going. The greater number of these were arriving from, or bound for, Logstown—Shenango—some eighteen miles down the Ohio, or Shannopin's Town, two miles up the Allegheny. But there were no evidences of scouting parties setting out for the east, although from what Cromit had told me I knew there were several small bands hanging on to the heels of Braddock's army.

We emerged from the woods and made for the eastern gate, and our coming seemed to be unnoticed. The Onondaga lingered behind to speak with a Mingo from down the Ohio, a Seneca by blood. From him he learned that Captain Jacobs was at Logstown and that Pontiac, who was gaining great influence over the Ojibways and Potawatomi and remaining supreme among the Ottawas, was at Shannopin's Town. One of the Canadian militia was lazily guarding the gate, half-asleep because of the hot sun. After scrutinizing us for a few moments he genially greeted:

"*Eh bien, m'sieu!* Do you bring Braddock's army at your heels?"

"It will be a long time before any English come to your gate," I replied with a laugh. "Braddock moves slowly."

"*Sacré!* But that is always good news. I am remembering you now, *m'sieu;* you have been here before."

"Last Spring. François Beland. A good Canadian like yourself."

"Well said! I greet you, *m'sieu.* You would see Captain de Beaujeu?"

I expressed that desire, and he yawned and called a soldier and told him to take my name to the commandant. Very soon the messenger returned and said I was to follow him. The Onondaga dropped behind to stroll about the enclosure. I was conducted to the commandant's house between the guard-house and the western gate.

All the way from Allaquippa's town I had been schooling my nerves for this meeting. There could be no partial success; either I would remain unsuspected, or go into a Huron kettle. I realized that some tongues might have wagged the truth about me since my former visit, for news travels fast in the forest. All doubts vanished, however, when Captain Beaujeu ran from the house and embraced me warmly. In dress and appearance I was only a *coureur de bois*, but on our first meeting I had given the name of an old family, whose fortunes were ruined, but whose blood held good.

"Welcome, many times welcome, my good friend. I have remembered our talks. So few to talk with here who have not talked themselves out. We impose upon each other's good nature with the old stories. Of late we do not wish to talk. Garrison life and the knowledge of what is coming through the woods to eat us up has soured our hearts till we act like sulky children. But you bring the freshness of the woods, of the wide, free places. Inside, and a glass of wine. I can at least speak a good word for the wine. Only by good luck did it escape the rascally carriers on the way down from the Niagara portage. *Ma foi!* It takes all the supplies sent from Canada to feed the men who start to bring them."

Daniel Hyacinth Mary Lienard de Beaujeu is forgotten by history, while the name of the man, who brought one of the greatest and most disastrous defeats ever inflicted on British arms, is destined to live down the many centuries. How many school-children of happier days ever heard of the French hero who worked the impossible and held France in the field for years instead of a few months?

Captain Beaujeu was forty-four years of age, a native of Montreal. His father had been a captain at Three Rivers, and forest fighting ran in the blood. The son already wore the cross of a Knight of St. Louis and had served as commandant at Niagara. He was absolutely incapable of fear and possessed a soul courage that went well with his heart. Other Frenchmen, who did little in comparison with his supreme accomplishment, are registered on the printed page, but few in these latter days know the deeds of Beaujeu.

I owe it to my luck—the Onondaga would say my *orenda*—that he did not turn me over to his merciless Indians, but that was the risk I ran in deceiving him. He was a great man and deserves a recognition his name may never receive. On my former visit he had sadly informed me how waste and corruption had done its deadly work so far as Du Quesne was concerned and that it would be impossible to hold the fort against the English.

We finished our wine and he pressed me for news. I gave him a part of the information Cromit had brought me. It was correct so far as it went, but I made no mention of the general sickness among the soldiers, nor of the uneasiness among the regulars and provincials, nor of the jealousies and bitterness among the officers. In so far as I talked I spoke truthfully, for his spies had been, and would be, keeping him informed, and I had no desire to be proven a liar. When I had finished I eagerly asked—

"We will fight, eh?"

I had expected him to speak as he had in early Spring, that it would be ruin to await Braddock's coming. He startled me by promptly replying:

"We will fight. I find there are some things a Chevalier of St. Louis can not do—run away without making a fight."

"Good!" I exclaimed. "Then reinforcements have arrived?"

"We are weaker in regulars and militia than we were in the Spring," he calmly replied. "But we have increased our Indian force a little. Only the Indians are an uncertainty; here today and singing their war-songs; disappeared tomorrow and sadly frightened because some leader has had an evil dream. *Monsieur*, you are devoted to France. You have cast your lot with us. You are entitled to the truth. The Indians are uneasy. Nay, they are frightened. They may refuse to make a fight. I make myself believe they will lif the ax and dispute Braddock's progress. But I have dreamed of waking and finding their huts empty, of finding my red allies returning to their northern villages. There have been no reinforcements from Canada. I have sent messengers to describe our desperate plight, but no men come back.

"The situation is daily growing worse, but I am now decided to make a fight and teach those slothful ones how a Frenchman can die. The Marquis de Du Quesne refuses to believe the situation is as serious as I describe. He believes the absurd negotiations in Europe will end in the recall of the English army; and were peace arrived at in Europe today Braddock would be here before the news could reach America. Such is the blindness of those who will not see. I speak bitterly? Live here and feel the net growing smaller. Listen day after day for one good word and hear nothing but the exaggerated stories of my Indian scouts. I rely only on what the French scouts tell me, and there's small comfort even in their talk.

"And, my friend, I have some news that is later than yours. A runner arrived yesterday, saying the army has reached Jacob's Creek and is waiting there for provisions to be brought up. So the English are having their troubles. I only pray that they come by the easy crossings of the Monongahela. If they do I propose to lay an ambuscade just before they reach the river. By Our Lady's help we may surprize them. But if Braddock chooses to march across Turtle Creek, twelve miles from its mouth, there will be no chance for an ambuscade; for the country, although rough for travel, has no good cover for a surprize attack. If he comes along that line then all we can do is to die fighting."

"Let us hope for the best," I said. I was devoutedly sincere in saying it, only my "best" was not his.

He laughed softly and replied:

"Monsieur Beland, what is there left for us to fight with except hope? Still it is good to show these stolid English how a Frenchman can die. I will attack even if the army comes by the Turtle Creek route; and I shall surely die as the Indians will not make a fight in that country."

He remembered the Onondaga and inquired about him. On my Spring visit to Du Quesne I had represented Round Paw as living apart from his Canadian brothers because of his lapse into paganism.

"Friar Baron will soon bring him back to the faith," Beaujeu confidently assured me. "I tell him that some of his red children do not behave like Christians, but he riposts by pointing out the example set them by the white race; and in God's truth I stand rebuked.

"Walk about the fort, *monsieur*, and spirit up the men with a few words. I must be busy for a bit rounding out my plans for a grand coup. But we will dine leisurely tonight. Thank the Lord those rascals did not drink all our wine in bringing it down from the portage! There will be several at the table whom you met on your former visit. There will be Lieutenant de Carqueville, Sieur de Parieux and Lieutenant de la Parade. The brothers de Normanville are out on a scout and won't come in until the enemy is very close.

"Poor Dupuy has served his king and has gone to his reward. I do not think you met him. A brave, simple soul who knew no fear. Nor was Lieutenant Beauvais here on your first visit, but he is a most pleasing man, and you will rejoice in forming his acquaintance."

"Lieutenant Beauvais," I repeated, the two words ringing oddly in my ears.

"You have met him in Montreal, perhaps?"

"The name sounds familiar. But I recall no officer acquaintance of that name."

"Somehow you two impress me as being much alike. The pleasure will be mutual, I know. I only regret poor Dupuy could not be here."

"I regret to infer from your words, *monsieur*, that your friend is dead."

"Killed on a recent scout. It is the reward of the forest to brave men."

My mind was whirling. My words seemed to come without any mental volition and I did not realize what I was saying until I had said it. De Beaujeu, as he escorted me to the door, added:

"Like yourself Beauvais is a man of deeds. He loves to go alone into the dangerous places."

"You flatter me, *monsieur*. And what hour do we dine?"

"We will not wait for Lieutenant Beauvais after seven. He should be here today."

THERE came a great surge of relief. His speech cleared the situation somewhat. Dupuy, killed by the Onondaga outside the little cabin, had been reported dead by the French Indians. Beauvais had been captured inside the cabin and his three red companions had died. So, there were no witnesses to his fate.

It is ill grace to jest over a dead man, but my revulsion of feeling allowed me to find something grimly humorous in this waiting dinner for one who was at the bottom of the Monongahela. Then I remembered the Frenchman carrying belts to Allaquippa and in parting from the commandant said:

"And Monsieur Falest? I trust to see him. Of course he has told you of our meeting in Allaquippa's town. I liked him much."

"Wait, wait, *monsieur!* If you please, tell me about Monsieur Falest. He should be here before now. He carried belts from the Governor of Canada. The belts were refused. A Huron, who carried belts from Pontiac, was found dead just outside the village. I am anxious to hear the details."

Now for a surety was I nonplused. He was waiting for Falest to come, and Falest had started twelve hours ahead of me. But Falest had not arrived, and yet the commandant knew the belts were refused by Allaquippa and that the Huron was dead. I stole a glance at his dark face, wondering if he were playing with me—if his cordial welcome was but a piece of mockery. He detected something in my face, and further inquired—

"You have kept back some bad news, *monsieur?*"

His tone was hard and brittle, that of a commandant rather than of a courteous host. I told him:

"Your words have surprized me. Monsieur Falest started for this place early last evening, intending to make a night trip of it. He was accompanied by a young Englishman who has a French heart."

"*Sacré bleu!* Do you rave, or are my ears lying to me?" he fiercely demanded.

"Monsieur de Beaujeu!" I exclaimed.

The bewilderment reflected in my thin face must have impressed him as being genuine, for he hastily cried:

"A thousand pardons if I seem to be rude, Monsieur Beland. But here is a mystery. Ha! Perhaps a bloody mystery. One that bodes ill for Du Quesne."

"Captain de Beaujeu, your words are so many puzzles to me," I coldly informed him. "I stood at the side of Monsieur Falest when he offered his belt to Allaquippa, who refused it. I was not in the village, however, when the dead Huron was found. I know that Allaquippa did not relish our friend's presence in the village and that he left early in the evening instead of waiting to make the journey with me in the morning as we had agreed. Do you mean to say that he and the young Englishman have not arrived?"

"The Englishman arrived, but not with Falest."

"Good Heavens! You do not mean to suspect he is accountable for Falest's failure to put in an appearance?"

"Hardly, under the circumstances. It is like this, Monsieur Beland: The young man arrived before daylight. But it was Lieutenant Beauvais who accompanied him.

I was tongue-tied for a good minute. It did not take me a second to realize that in the vague light of early morning Cromit had made a mistake and had killed poor Falest instead of Beauvais; that it was Beauvais and the girl who had passed so close to me when they entered the fort trail in the evening. Falest, whom I feared none, was at the bottom of the Monongahela; Beauvais, the last man I desired to meet, was due at any moment to keep a dinner appointment with me at the board. The world seemed to be tumbling about my ears. I could only say:

"I do not understand. Falest was to leave the Indian village with me. Because of Allaquippa's ill will he changed his plans and left at night; or at least I surely believed he left at night. Now, behold! A miracle is worked. He starts with the Englishman, and it is Lieutenant Beauvais who comes in his place!"

While I talked I wished for eyes in the back of my head, that I might see if Beauvais was approaching to unmask me.

Beaujeu smiled faintly and pleasantly said:

"It may not be a mystery after all. Lieutenant Beauvais did tell me that Falest planned to start at night and for some reason changed his plan. The Englishman, who is French at heart, was impatient to reach the fort and came with Beauvais instead of waiting to come with Falest. Yes, it is simple enough. Falest stayed over to get some bit of news. I shall be surprized if he does not arrive before we sit down to dinner."

"Yes, yes, that seems to make it clear, Monsieur de Beaujeu. Your speaking as if Monsieur Beauvais was absent from the fort misled me," I said.

"He went to Shenango yesterday and is due to be back today. But, pardon my curiosity, *monsieur;* I do not understand how you missed seeing Monsieur Beauvais at the Indian village."

"After Allaquippa refused the belt I left the village and was absent for the greater part of the day. I did not intend to bore you with the details of what was purely a personal affair, but in brief it is this——"

And I sketched my experience with the drunken Delawares, and represented my return to the village as being subsequent to Falest's departure, as I supposed, for Du Quesne.

"Most certainly he was not in the village, nor was the Englishman, when I entered it," I declared.

"I congratulate you on your escape, *monsieur*. You did not see Lieutenant Beauvais, for he arrived and departed while you were a prisoner. Ah, now it begins to straighten out. For some reason Falest left the village that night. Our belt had been refused and our Huron killed. Beauvais told me that much. Falest was unwelcome at the village, yet he tarried outside to transact some business. Perhaps to win over some of the younger Delawares. We shall know what it was all about when he comes. We shall laugh at the wonderment his change of plans has occasioned."

I LEFT him and went wandering about the fort, seeking the Onondaga to tell him that our *orendas* were very simple, or had been asleep, to allow us to stick our heads into such an ugly trap. Passing through the eastern gate were Potawatomi, always the close ally of the French; fierce and warlike Mingoes as the Ohio Iroquois were called; Shawnee warriors with a tigerish lust to fall on the English could they believe the French were to win the war; long-haired Ottawas, a ferocious people, the children of Pontiac, and the Ojibways, who accepted this chief as leader. Outside the stockade many kettles were cooking, and did Beauvais show up to unmask me I knew I would be turned over to the swarthy fellows.

A fight in the forest is far different, even when against great odds, from being penned up in a stockade and captured alive. The horror of warfare in 1755 was the fear of being taken prisoner. It was a warm day and yet I felt a chill as I glanced about in search of Round Paw. Let us but get through the gate and to the edge of the forest and I would ask no more of fate.

Instead of the Indian I came upon the Dinwold girl. She was standing by the water-gate. She had her hair carefully arranged under her hat, or cut off, I could not tell which. And she would pass for a young man readily enough; a very young man. Yet she had betrayed her sex to Beauvais, and I wondered if de Beaujeu also knew the truth.

Far from being surprized at seeing me she quickly greeted:

"I have been waiting for you, mister. I saw you when you come in."

"I shall call myself most lucky if you see me go out alive and not a prisoner," I told her. "I have just learned that you came here with one called Beauvais."

"At the last minute Mr. Falest changed his mind. He told me to tell the truth to Mr. Beauvais, who, he said was a good man. Mr. Falest said he should be in such a mortal hurry to make the fort I had best go on ahead. Mr. Beauvais is a good man. I'm to go to Canada at the first chance. What do you mean about being lucky if you git out of here alive? Do they guess you're a scout for Braddock?"

"For God's sake, hush!" I cautioned; for we were near the kitchen and sharp ears might overhear us. "If Beauvais comes back from Shenango and finds me here the Indians will burn me."

Her small face went white with horror.

"You can pass through the gate," she muttered. "Why do you wait? Go! Go now!"

"Two things hold me. The Onondaga, whom I haven't found—and you."

"Me?" she gasped.

"You must leave here and get back to the settlements where you belong. You must stop this thinking of going to Canada.

It's a mad scheme. Do you believe that all men are honest, as Beauvais seems to be? You are English and can not speak French. How do you know how you will be treated in Canada, especially after the French are whipped and any one of English blood is pointed out to be hated? How do you know the few French soldiers, once they're driven from this place, can protect you from their own Indians? Why, child, the French themselves will be fortunate if they escape being killed by the Ottawas and Hurons. You must stop this foolishness and go back with me—if I can find the Indian and get through the gate."

"If you make me go back I shall always hate you," she passionately returned; and could Beaujeu have seen her then he would have known she was a woman. Before I could speak an expression of great misery passed over her face and she whispered—

"And if anything happens to you I'll kill myself."

I had no patience with her, or with her sex. Fair Josephine in old Alexandria, who plighted herself to the last of the Bronds, and this elf-woman of the Witches' Head, were all of a piece—always changeable.

"I'll help you if I can," I told her. "But I don't propose to go into a Huron kettle trying it unless you are willing to help yourself."

Much shouting and singing outside the eastern gate broke up our talk, and we turned and looked to see what the clamor portended. Through the gate, walking two by two, came several Frenchmen. With staring gaze I recognized Lieutenant de Carqueville and Lieutenant de la Parade. Behind these two came de Parieux and a man I did not recall. Next came a long string of Indians. Pontiac, wearing no paint, led these, a gray blanket thrown over his shoulders although the day was very hot. Behind him came Captain Jacobs and Shingis, the leaders of the Delawares.

The Indians were whooping and singing. The cause of their demonstration puzzled me until I beheld the body of a bear, slung on a pole. Over the bear's head was draped a red coat, taken from some unfortunate English soldier, who had been caught off his guard by some of the enemy's scouts.

"He isn't with them!" whispered the girl. "Thank God he isn't with them!"

I had been holding my breath while I waited, as had she, to behold Beauvais in the procession.

"Come with me and make the forest and return to where you belong," I urged. "Then spend your life hating me if you will. The Onondaga should be near the gate. The singing would draw him to it."

As the procession marched toward the commandant's house we worked along the river-stockade, turning when we reached the prison in the corner, and making by the storehouse to the smith's shop in the hope of gaining the gate without encountering the Frenchmen.

But although I saw Delawares from the Susquehanna, Shawnees from Grave's Creek and the Muskingum, Mingoes from the Ohio, and Iroquois from the Long House, Ojibways and Potawatomi from the northern lakes, Ottawas from Superior, and Hurons from the Falls of Montreal and the mission of Lorette, Caunawagas from the St. Lawrence, and even Abnaki from the far eastern streams, I failed to locate the tall figure of Round Paw of the Onondagas.

"Go on!" she whispered, as I halted just outside the gate.

"My friend. I must not leave him behind."

"Go on! I will find him and tell him," she whispered, giving me a little push.

"He would not understand. He is not with the savages outside. He must be inside the stockade somewhere," I was demurring, when she gave a little cry and moaned—

"Mister, you've killed both of us."

Before I could look about to learn what had prompted this lugubrious speech an arm was hooked through mine and Captain Beaujeu was genially inviting:

"Come, my friend. We will not wait for Beauvais. The Indians have killed a bear, and Pontiac tells them it's a good omen. We will have the chiefs in while we eat and give them some brandy to keep their hearts high. We will give some laced coats to the two warriors who killed the bear. Come, *monsieur*, let us forget for a few hours that the English are drawing close, and show nothing but confidence before our red children. The Englishman shall go with us, if he will."

But the Dinwold girl was walking back toward the river-stockade, and I explained:

"He speaks no French yet. He would not enjoy it."

CHAPTER VII

BEAUJEU GIVES A DINNER

THERE were six of us at the table and two empty chairs. One of these was reserved for Beauvais. I followed the example of the others on entering the room and stood my long rifle up in the córner nearest the door; but in my belt, and concealed by the skirts of my hunting-shirt, were my ax and knife. Heavy banks of clouds, threatening rain and lightning, brought dusk prematurely, and a soldier lighted candles on two sides of the room. I sat facing an open window through which the savages took turns in watching us.

Over their heads the lightning ripped a path along the horizon, and our ears caught the low grumbling of the sky-monster seeking battle with some huge water-serpent. But Hinunn, the mighty Thunder-god of the Iroquois, brother of the beneficent West Wind, was friendly to the red men, and no heed was given to his rumblings. The night was closing in hot and close, and the door, like the window, was left open. About the door were grouped various tribal leaders, and the two warriors who had killed the bear.

I was seated between Sieur de Carqueville and Sieur de Parieux. Beaujeu was at the head of the table and facing the open door. After we had taken our places and wine had been poured the commandant called for two pewter dishes and filled them with brandy. Two laced coats were brought and placed beside him. Then he called for the slayers of the bear to enter. Pontiac escorted them forward.

Pontiac was about thirty-five years old, a chief of the Ottawas and holding great influence over the Chippewas as his mother was of that nation. As the English were soon to discover he was far above the average red leader in intelligence. Not only was he insensible to fear, but he possessed the gift of concealing his real motives both by speech and bearing. This art of dissimulation he had developed to a high degree and consequently was a consummate actor.

Although but two warriors had been summoned Pontiac advanced to take part in the ceremony. This was in keeping with his astute practise of never missing an opportunity to impress on white and red men the supremacy of his leadership.

He came to interpret Onontio's words to his red children, he gravely explained to the commandant. He was conspicuous among the other savages, in that he affected none of the gewgaws and ribbons so dear to the Indian heart. He stood there stern of visage, a figure molded by Destiny. I could not but think as I looked upon him that he must scorn much that went to make up the lives of his red fellows. And yet he was as artful in playing upon their superstitions and weaknesses as he was in deceiving an enemy.

The commandant recognized him as being the intellectual superior of the other chiefs, and rose and clasped his hand and asked him to be seated and take a glass of wine. But Pontiac seldom if ever departed from his rôle. He was all for the red man and preferred to remain standing while he filled the office of interpreter. He gave the impression of having but one desire—to expedite the bestowal of honors on the bear-killers. And yet his crafty mind knew what the white men were thinking; that his was the dominant personality. He could perform a humble service because it did honor to the recipient.

Captain Jacobs and Shingis, of the Delawares, for whose heads the Governor of Pennsylvania would soon be offering a reward of a hundred and forty pounds apiece, were outside among the fighting men. But I do not believe they resented the great Ottawa's quickness to put himself ahead and act the mouthpiece when he was not acting the leader. Some will say that Pontiac was a fiend incarnate, one who used the peace-pipe to mask his plans for wholesale killings. My experiences early taught me that the white men, as well as red, were cruel in war.

There were pioneers, like Black Jack, of the Juniata, and a score of others I could name, who looked upon the red man as something to be exterminated; just as we would turn out and burn a huge den of snakes. Pontiac was a great man, by whatever racial standards we judge him. And surely deceit and intrigue were practised in the Old World long before this red leader became an adept at dissimulation.

The bear-killers greedily bolted their brandy and proudly put on their gay coats although the room was like an oven. Pontiac drank but a portion of his wine. After the *manes* of the bear had been appeased and the happy killers had hurried outside to display their finery the Ottawa chief remained to say:

"Son of Onontio, child of the French king, your master and our uncle, the sorcerers of the Potawatomi have dreamed of a medicine-lodge set up outside this room." And he pointed through the open window. "The dead bear is the English army, the dream said. In the medicine-lodge ghosts will talk, and tell if the English army will have the ax stuck in its head."

Beaujeu, quick to utilize any superstition that favored his growing plans for resisting Braddock's approach, stood up and sonorously replied:

"Pontiac, great chief of the Ottawas, your words make Onontio's heart warm and glad. With the mighty Pontiac to lead our red brothers the medicine-lodge ghosts will tell but one thing—that an ax, half-red and half-French, will split the English head. Let the brave Potawatomi set up the medicine-lodge where we may see it and hear its voices. Let the ghosts of ancient warriors tell us how to destroy the English and take for our own use their long wagons of guns and cloth and food. Tell your red brothers that Onontio will send them a keg of brandy to make their hearts glad."

Pontiac turned and stalked from the room, a dramatic figure, a diplomat by nature. Shouts and yells of approval greeted Pontiac's announcement concerning the gift of liquor; and herein again did the man turn the incident to his own advancement as a leader; for there was none outside the room who did not believe it was Pontiac, rather than the commandant, who was donating the brandy.

Beaujeu smiled grimly as he listened to the chief's harangue and, still staring through the open door, he said to us:

"*Messieurs*, there speaks one who some day will make great trouble for some one. Whoever holds that man fast to France does France and our king a great service. Now while they are putting up their lodge let us eat and talk."

I had renewed acquaintance with the three officers before entering the room and had been made known to the fourth man, Sieur de St. Therese, a pleasant-mannered fellow. Platters of steaming meat and some good bread were served.

Outside the window rose the guttural voices of the Potawatomi wizards as they directed the erection of the mystery-lodge. Soon there was added the fierce notes of a war-song as the brandy began to take effect; and by the light of several fires we could glimpse stark forms dancing madly around a war-post, each dancer pausing to drive his ax into the wood in pantomime of braining a foe. For a background was the heat-lightning and the far-off bellowing of Hinun, the Thunder-god, giving battle to his immemorial enemy, the water-serpent. Beaujeu watched the frenzied warriors for a moment and sighed:

"If I could hold them to that pitch when I lead them to battle! But they are unstable as the wind. Should the voice in the lodge tell them tonight that defeat awaited them in the forest they would all be following paths to the Muskingum and the lakes by morning. We are depending upon their leaders. I am confident the medicine-lodge will speak for an attack on the English. Pontiac is a wise man. He knows he can not add to his fame by leading a retreat.

"*Messieurs*, now that we have satisfied our appetites I will ask Monsieur Beland to tell us about the hostility of the woman Allaquippa and her hostility to us. Then you can decide if her village at the mouth of the Youghiogeny is a menace to France. Lieutenant Beauvais already has told us something, but Monsieur Beland was in the village longer than Beauvais and had a most significant experience."

So, for the second time since entering the fort, I recounted the woman sachem's refusal of the French belt and the killing of Pontiac's belt-carrier. When I had finished Beaujeu gently prompted:

"No false modesty, Monsieur Beland. You have omitted your adventure with the Leni-lenape and the torture-post. Our friends will wish to hear that."

I described that disagreeable experience, and when I had ceased speaking Sieur de St. Therese excitedly cried—

"It is time that evil nest was destroyed."

Beaujeu's eyes sparkled.

"What does Sieur de Carqueville say?" he asked.

De Carqueville promptly replied:

"We are *in extremis* without Braddock

finding a resting-place should his line of march take him to the mouth of the Youghiogeny. The country ahead of his army should be swept clean of English allies."

De la Parade lifted a glass of wine and gave:

"Death to the English Indians! Death to Allaquippa!"

"At least to her Indians," qualified Beaujeu. "To destroy the woman might have a bad influence on the Leni-lenape we have among our red forces. She could be sent to Montreal where she could do no more mischief."

After the amended toast had been drunk Sieur de Parieux counseled—

"It would be best, I believe, to send the Ottawas, or the Ojibways, to remove the village."

Beaujeu considered this suggestion thoughtfully for a few moments, and then turned to me and invited:

"Let us have Monsieur Beland's advice. He was all but put to the torture while there."

I told them:

"It is my wish to keep my judgment untinged by any personal prejudice because of what almost happened to me at the hands of that woman's warriors. It is my belief that at the worst she will only succeed in holding her Indians neutral. Their numbers are few. When they find there is but a small force of Indians with the English army they will not dare to join it. If you send the northern Indians against the village you may make our Shawnees and Mingoes uneasy. It may spoil their fighting spirit. Certainly your Delawares would not relish doing the work, for after all they are of the same race."

There was a silence when I finished, then St. Therese complained:

"But *monsieur* does not make a definite statement. In general he advises us not to disturb the village."

Compelled to speak more openly I boldly retorted:

"I believe it will be better strategy to send them brandy and leave them alone. In attacking them we run the risk of frightening the Ohio Indians. They will argue that if the lake tribes can destroy Allaquippa's town they may later decide to destroy a Muskingum town."

"*Pardi!* France is not used to overlooking any enemy," demurred de la Parade. "The woman should be taught that she can not torture Frenchmen."

"Her warriors were drunk. Neither Falest nor Beauvais was annoyed," I reminded them.

"*Eh!*" muttered Beaujeu, tugging at his long hair and frowning at his glass. Finally he threw up his head and said:

"Our brother speaks with wisdom, although it sounds like the cold, calculating counsel of an Englishman. But it is true, *messieurs*, that many of the Indians do not care whether the dog eats the wolf, or the wolf eats the dog. Especially is this true of the Shawnees, the Mingoes, the Leni-lenape and the Iroquois. We can not risk a split in our red ranks. If the Shawnees steal away to the Muskingum and Graves' Creek then we may expect to behold the lake tribes leaving for the north without lifting an ax. I am forced to believe it will be better to leave Allaquippa's town alone.

"If Our Lady's intercession should give us a victory over Braddock the task of pacifying the English Leni-lenape will be easier if there be no bones of their warriors for France to cover. If it is fated that we lose we shall have our hands full in withdrawing from this fort without having to fight a rear-guard engagement against infuriated neutrals. For I solemnly assure you, *messieurs*, that our own savages will be a problem should we have to retire.

"Monsieur Beland, I rejoice that you are here and have spoken as you have. I only wish that Monsieur Beauvais could join us and give his views. He is a cool, thoughtful man, and, like yourself, would speak without prejudice."

"I know what Sieur Charles de Langlade would say if he were here," muttered de la Parade.

So did I know what this brother-in-law of Nissowaquet, an Ottawa chief, would advise. Beaujeu spread out his hands and said:

"But de Langlade would be biased. It is as well that he is at Shenango tonight."

It required several rounds of wine to restore us to a proper enthusiasm. I felt a coolness on the part of my two neighbors, although none at the table openly disagreed with Beaujeu's decision. But de la Parade, who had drunk extermination to the village, was vastly more popular than I. Beaujeu's mention of Beauvais made my back feel chilly, and my gaze wandered frequently toward the open door. And yet when I attempted to decide just what I should do, did he put in an appearance, my mind refused to work. It was as if my intelligence were paralyzed. I was keenly conscious of dreading his arrival but was incapable of planning a defense.

There was a wild wish in my heart that the Onondaga might discover the truth and manage in some fashion to intercept him. This, of course, was not based on reason. It did set me to thinking about the Onondaga and the Dinwold girl. I wondered if I had been observed when walking and talking with her, and if, should I be apprehended, she would be held to account. My only consolation was that Beaujeu was a gentleman, and that once she disclosed her sex he would not permit her to be harmed.

There remained the dangers of the retreat to Canada. Pontiac never lost an opportunity to advance himself. Once he saw that the French were whipped I doubted his loyalty to the Lilies. Looking back to those hectic days in July I am convinced I misjudged him. The events of the next few years was to establish his never-ending hostility to the English.

"*Monsieur* passes the wine without taking toll. Are his thoughts back in Allaquippa's town, where they tried to roast him?" courteously inquired Sieur de Carqueville.

"Old forest habits, *monsieur*. I never trust to the wine as I do to my rifle," I lightly answered and remedying my neglect by filling the glass. "Once we are back in Montreal or Quebec I will drink wine with *monsieur* without restraint. I give you, 'Confusion to the enemy.' "

They drank standing. Beaujeu said:

"I know what our friend is feeling. It is hostility of the forest pressing about us. Only a bold face saves us from our red friends outside. *Ma foi!* But it would never do for us to forget and overindulge ourselves like those out there." And he nodded toward the window, outside of which the drunken savages were raising a most fiendish hullabaloo.

The dancers had quit the fire and war-post and were now leaping grotesquely by the window, a swift shifting string of distorted and monstrously painted faces, and a bewildering flourishing of axes. Some of the axes were painted red the better to exemplify the wielders' sanguinary ambitions. As the savages pressed closer to the building in passing in review we saw them only from the neck up, and the effect was that of detached heads floating and bobbing by.

If De Langlade was not present his brother-in-law, Nissowaquet, was. Although head chief of the Ottawas as early as 1721 he came bounding by the window with the springy step of youth, his face having one side painted green and the other red. Beaujeu pointed him out to me, else I never should have known him although I had seen him once, *sans* paint, at Detroit. Beaujeu chuckled and added:

"The old rascal is stark naked, a lack of deportment our Hurons can not get used to." Then more soberly, "And it is over such trifles as that a tribal war may start at any moment. Ah, *monsieur*, he who commands red men plays with fire!"

Then there came the sweetest strain of music I ever heard although it was produced by the guttural voice of a most hideously painted creature, who had concealed all suggestions of a human countenance by painting his face with a series of circles in black, red and white. His song was sweet in my ears because he sang through the open window the simple refrain:

"*Ha-hum-weh. Ha-hum-weh.*"

" 'I belong to the Wolf Clan. I belong to the Wolf Clan.' "

Surely words were never more welcome. I felt the tightness in my chest give way; and I knew that Round Paw of the Onondagas was on the scene and ready to stand or fall with me. Beaujeu, too, caught the song, and remarked:

"That's not a northern voice, nor Shawnee, nor Leni-lenape. It sounds like a Mingo, and yet it is different."

"I was not giving much heed," I said. "It sounded like an Iroquois, singing his Wolf song."

"One of the New York Iroquois, whom Monsieur William Johnson can't hold back from the hunting. The Long House could never resist a red path," said de la Parade with a low chuckle.

Next we had a view of a Potawatomi who brandished a war-club of birch. The club was painted red and black and was decorated with brass nails. The arm holding the club boasted of a badge of skunk-skin to show the man had seized a wounded enemy by the arm and had held him. Three of the feathers in his hair were notched, evidencing he had killed and scalped as many foes, and there were other feathers unnotched, indicating he had scalped warriors slain by his companions. For after the northern fashion of counting coup four feathers could be worn for the death of each enemy slain—one by the man who made the kill, one by the man who took the scalp, and one by each of the two men who might assist in the scalping. This fellow remained before the window long enough to chant in a throaty voice:

" 'An eagle feather I see; a brave I have caught. A wolf I see; a wolf I have caught.' "

Beaujeu interpreted the song for me. I would have thought nothing about it had not the Onondaga soon passed the window again, proving he had not waited his turn, and proclaimed himself to be of the Wolf clan. And directly following him reappeared the Potawatomi with his boast of having caught a wolf. My nerves began tightening. There was a sinister significance in the second appearance of the two men. It was plain that the Potawatomi was exerting himself to keep at the heels of my friend.

There was no time to worry over the coincidence, however. I was confident the Potawatomi, even if something had aroused his suspicions, would never catch Round Paw off his guard. The dancing suddenly ceased and we noted that the frame-work of the medicine-lodge was up, and that the wizards were rapidly covering it with medicine-robes so as to shut off all view of the interior except as the small flap was pulled back and revealed a small, square opening facing our window.

Pontiac came through the doorway and spoke to Beaujeu. The commandant nodded, and explained to us—

"He says one of the Potawatomi, Little Wolf, wishes to entertain us with some magic."

WE SETTLED back to enjoy the jugglery, but my nerves gave a jump when in Little Wolf I recognized the dancer who had said he had caught a wolf. He had discarded his war-club and carried a bag and a bow and arrow. The head of the arrow was painted red, showing it was strong medicine. He halted near the table and eyed us all steadily. I imagined his gaze rested a trifle longer on me than on the others, but set it down to my being a stranger.

Beaujeu rose and handed him a glass of wine and spoke first in the Ottawa tongue and then in French, saying:

"Little Wolf is a mighty wizard. When the medicine-lodge is ready he will call the ghosts to talk to us. They will tell us how to strike an ax into the English."

Little Wolf refused the wine and glanced about until he had located the brandy. He stretched out his hand for the stronger drink and Beaujeu threw out the wine and accommodated him. Tossing off the brandy he placed his bow and arrow on a small side-table and turned his back on us and made much business of examining the contents of the bag. When he faced about he had a long knife in his hand. This he proceeded to swallow up to the hilt. So far as I could observe the blade went down his throat.

After we had expressed a proper amount of astonishment he took some cedar bark from the bag and placed it on a pewter dish and lighted it with a wall-candle. When it was burning brightly he washed his hands in the flame and gave no signs of being burned. Very likely he daubed his hands in a dust-like clay obtained from the dried-up bed of some northern lake—then again cedar bark does not make a very hot fire. When he had finished the ordeal we clapped our hands, and Beaujeu told him he was a mighty sorcerer.

From his belt the wizard next pulled a long arrow and apparently thrust it down his throat up to the feathers. I had accepted the knife-swallowing as being genuine, for I had seen a white man do it; but the barbed arrow I could not accept. Beaujeu whispered to me:

"Little Wolf is a cunning rogue. The reed shaft is made of short sections which are driven together when he holds the barb between his teeth and presses down. But applaud him generously. Should he make the Voice in the lodge tell the Indians not to fight against Braddock we would find ourselves without a red force."

We clapped our hands and pressed them to our lips, and Little Wolf was much pleased. Picking up the bow and red-tipped arrow he sang a song in which were repeated several times, "Scarlet is its head."

I became keenly interested when, after a slight pause he fiercely shouted—

"It finds its way into a Wolf."

He held the arrow so those staring in at the window might look on it, and among the spectators was the circle-covered visage of Round Paw. The wizard had uttered a threat three times during the last hour, and a "wolf" was always the victim. The dead bear had been accepted as a symbol for Braddock's army.

I did not believe the sachem meant the English when he promised death to a wolf. But I was convinced that the fellow for some reason intended harm to the Onondaga. There must be a logical cause for this professed enmity, and naturally I believed my friend had incurred suspicions. I dared not attempt a signal although I did glare into the Onondaga's eyes. Little Wolf gathered up his belonging to retire, but Beaujeu detained him by inquiring—

"Why does not the great wizard shoot the medicine-arrow into the wolf now?"

The Onondaga allowed two braves to crowd in from each side so only his head partly showed between theirs.

"A ghost in the medicine-lodge will shoot it. It will find its way to the Wolf."

Those at the window were very quiet, their eyes glowing as they began to sense a dramatic climax.

"Onontio's sons wish to see the arrow when it finds its mark," insisted Beaujeu. He too had detected some significance in the fellow's mysterious talk.

"Onontio's sons can not see the ghost. Only medicine-eyes can see that. Their eyes can see the arrow when it goes through the Wolf's neck. Their eyes can see that without their moving from their places."

Beaujeu was very curious if not stirred by a stronger emotion. He knew the workings of the red mind. I did not relish his persistent interest, and I feared something would happen to force me out of my false composure. In casting about for something to break the commandant's line of thought I recalled Jacob Hardy's trick with the strip of bark. I announced to Beaujeu that I wished to do a bit of French magic for Little Wolf, and asked him to have brought a strip of bark or paper, two or three feet in length.

The commandant frowned slightly as if resenting the interruption; then smiled pleasantly and requested the wizard to wait a bit and watch some French magic. The Indians at the window crowded closer, and the Onondaga resumed his former favorable position. The doorway became filled with faces and Pontiac stepped inside the room, his gaze suspicious and alert. The commandant informed the wizard of my request and asked him if he had some bark.

Little Wolf hesitated, then sullenly answered:

"Little Wolf has bark. It is medicine. The white man can do no magic with it."

I repeated that all bark was the same to my magic and that I was willing to try with the Potawatomi bark. For bait I added—

"But it will be very hard for my medicine to make magic with it."

The Potawatomi turned his back so none might see what was in the mystery-bag. When he faced about he was holding a roll of cedar bark of the required length and about two inches wide. He placed this on the table and leered malevolently at me, as if defying me to make my medicine work. My table companions were watching me curiously, eager to witness the trick.

In unrolling and straightening the strip and in allowing all but the two ends to fall into my lap I gave it three half-turns by a twist of my thumbs and fingers. Holding it so only the two half-ends showed above the table I called for two pins, and Beaujeu plucked two brass pins from his hunting-tunic. I requested Sieur de Carqueville to fasten the ends together so as to leave space for my knife to cut between the pins.

"This will be very strong magic," spoke up a deep voice outside the window. The tongue was that of a Delaware, but I knew the speaker was Round Paw.

Little Wolf was regretting the loan of the bark; yet it was medicine-bark and he was a magician, and he clung to his faith in the superiority of his magic over mine. It would not do for him to appear to fear white magic, yet his gaze wandered uneasily to the saturnine face of Pontiac, now several feet inside the door. I explained to Beaujeu that I should cut the circle of bark lengthways, and, after the commandant had repeated this in several dialects, I asked the wizard what would be the result of the bisection.

He lived by trickery and knew I must have some game, and yet he could only believe the evidence of his eyes. He sullenly replied:

"Little Wolf, sorcerer of the Potawatomi, has not been a child for many Winters. There will be two hoops instead of one after the white man cuts the bark along the middle. They will be too big for scalp-hoops and not stiff enough. But the scalp of a wolf can be sewed to one side by the women and then hung on a pole."

Beaujeu leaned forward, his chin resting on one palm, and stared closely at my hands, perhaps to make sure I did just as I said I should do. I asked for a sharp knife, and de la Parade handed over one with a razor edge. Holding the bark on the table I began slowly feeding it upward under my knife, smoothing out the kinks caused by the twists before they came into view. There was silence among the warriors at the window and the door, much the same as if all were holding their breath. Pontiac glided nearer, striving to discover the key to the trick. At last I had finished severing the loop and allowed it to twist up in my hands. Then I said:

"I will now hand this to Little Wolf, who is a great wizard. Can his medicine tell him what he will find?"

The sorcerer muttered:

"Little Wolf has spoken. There are two hoops of bark. There is no medicine in that."

"Then hang one hoop around your neck and the other around the neck of Onontio's oldest son." And I indicated Beaujeu. "Do that and you will never die in battle."

I passed over the bark and with a grunt Little Wolf seized it and with an impatient gesture sought to shake it apart into the two loops he was so confident of finding. Of course he finally discovered there was but one loop with a loose knot tied in it. Low exclamations sounded at door and window. Pontiac stepped forward and declared:

"It is a trick: The white man tied the two loops together while blinding us with much talk."

He took the bark from the wizard's hands to point out the truth of his statement. He knew there was but one loop at the beginning of the trick and he had seen me sever it lengthwise. His reason told him there must now be two separate sections. But as he examined the snarl his assurance left him. In desperation he placed the bark on the table and pressing lightly with the point of his knife began making a mark along the center of the strip, and ended where he had commenced.

Without a word he left the room. Little Wolf refused to touch the bark again and likewise departed. I picked up the loop and tossed it through the window, whereat the savages scattered as if I had hurled a poisonous serpent into their midst. And the voice of the Onondaga, speaking the Delaware tongue, once more proclaimed—

"It is very strong magic."

The Frenchmen, with the exception of Beaujeu, were amused at the Indians' fear and bewilderment. The commandant was thoughtful and examined the bark and said:

"It is so, Monsieur Beland, but I do not know why. I know it is a trick and I believe I can do it now, but it will be easier to defeat Braddock than to reason it out, I fear. But, *monsieur*, if you will pardon me, I believe it will be better in the future to let the red magicians do the tricks."

"I simply wished to amuse, *monsieur*. My bag of tricks is emptied."

"I can do it as well as Monsieur Beland," said Sieur de Parieux; "but only the Lord knows why it is not in two pieces as it should be, even if it is twisted before the knife cuts it. Our reason tells us that no matter how many times one twists the cursed thing it must be in two pieces if cut all the way around through the center of the strip. It must be so, and yet it is not so, —— take it!"

"And let the —— also take the knot tied in it," added Sieur St. Therese. "And let us have more wine."

"One glass, and then we must become spectators of red magic," said Beaujeu as the soft thudding of a drum sounded inside the medicine-lodge.

WE CROWDED closer together so that all might have a fair view of the lodge, and the savages at the window drew aside. A fire was lighted on each side of the lodge so as to illuminate brilliantly the front of the structure. Beaujeu whispered:

"Little Wolf is now inside. But name of

the ——! What did he mean about his arrow finding a wolf? One can never tell how the red mind is working."

"He may have an enemy he wishes to kill and credit the killing to a ghost," I suggested.

"Maybe. I hope not. If their minds start running away with them they'll outrun a wolf-pack in getting back to their northern villages. However, it can't be serious. Pontiac must know what he meant and approves; and Pontiac is one leader I will count on."

The drum thudded monotonously for two or three minutes, gradually increasing in volume, then abruptly ceasing. A weak voice, talking in the language of the Delaware, called out:

"What do my children want? Why do my children call me back to this lodge? I am the first of your grandfathers. You have called me over a long path."

There followed the shrill voice of a woman, but in a tongue I did not understand. Next the wizard's voice, husky and labored, entered the dialogue, and in Delaware he asked:

"O Grandfather of all the red people, tell us of the Ingelishman. Is he strong? Will he fight strong? Will your children be struck in the head?"

"The answer to that can easily spoil all my plans!" gritted Beaujeu.

The medicine-lodge rocked and swayed as if buffeted by a mighty wind. Discordant noises arose—evil forces striving to prevent the Voice from answering. There sounded the barking of dogs and the scream of the panther and the piping wail of a child. A fearful visage showed for an instant at the small opening and was succeeded by another. Then with a single booming note from the medicine-drum silence returned to the lodge. After a few moments the weak voice of the first of all grandfathers spoke, saying:

"Little Wolf is a mighty wizard. He drives away the black spirit that wants to stop my mouth. I am the first of your grandfathers. I tell you this—the floor of the forest will be red with the blood of the Ingelish. The Manito is angry to see his red children losing their villages and land. Let the arrow find the false Wolf and then go into battle without fear."

Silence again, and Beaujeu wiped the sweat from his brows and muttered:

"*Nom de Dieu!* What deviltry is he up to? It's some of Pontiac's work. He should have told me first. Getting a fight out of the Indians is conditional on their killing the 'false wolf.' Monsieur Beland, I fear you are right. Little Wolf has a rival. If so he must kill him, or else the flag of France must be lowered."

He became silent as from the lodge came the voice of Little Wolf. It sounded very weak and we had to strain our ears to catch his words. Panting for breath he called out:

"The Voice is very far away. I can hear it, but my brothers can not. It rests, but will come very soon— Wait. The little white dog is barking. He is leading the voice back."

Another pause and then we heard the yelping and ki-yi-ing of a puppy. Then came the voice, this time sounding much louder. It commanded—

"Have the warriors who danced about the war-post pass around the lodge four times, and let each ask himself if he is a true man."

"Ah! Now it develops. Soon there will be a killing," hissed St. Therese.

There followed more shaking and swaying of the lodge. Pontiac's voice rang out, calling on the dancers to fall in line and begin circling the lodge and for men with straight tongues to fear nothing. Painted faces in profile began passing the window. Each savage kept his face averted from the lodge and each seemed to step in greater haste when abreast of the small opening. I sought the Onondaga in the long line, but failed to behold him. I took note of the first man to pass the window, and when he appeared for the second time there sounded a gurgling cry from the interior of the lodge, after which the sides flapped and fluttered violently and the long-drawn-out howl of a wolf took the place of the puppy's yapping. The savages quickened their pace until they were moving almost on a run. A faint voice called out:

"Where is the mighty Pontiac? Why does he not march with his children?"

Pontiac, standing at one side of the lodge and near the small opening, did not seem inclined to join the line. Each savage in passing questioned him with a look, for the Voice of the first grandfather was far more potent than any earthly leader's medicine. He succumbed to the impact of the repeated inquiry, and, although he had not been one of those dancing about the post, he took his place. But unlike the others he glanced sharply at the opening on passing it. The barking of the little white dog came back, followed by a deep voice chanting—

"Ha-hum-wehl"

I held my breath and waited for the climax, whatever it might be. Beaujeu whispered:

"I think it is our friend, who stands at the door talking with the young Englishman with the French heart. The young man is timid. He will not come in unless strongly urged. Ah! Excellent. It is our friend, the good Beauvais. He presses the young man to enter. When this damnable marching and yowling stops I will call out for the stranger to join us and become better acquainted."

I turned my head slowly, my heart thumping like an Indian drum. Beauvais stood with his back to us. He was speaking very earnestly to the Dinwold girl, one hand resting on her slim shoulder. He was trying to induce her to enter and she was striving to detain him. I gathered my feet under me and made ready to leap over the table and to trust to luck in plunging through the window and into the red mob. Beauvais straightened and removed his hand from the girl's shoulder and started to turn about and enter the room. The girl seized his arm and frantically essayed to hold him back. He was motionless for a moment, as if amazed at her action; then shook off her grasp and stepped backward through the door.

The Onondaga's terrible war-whoop jerked my gaze to the window. The front of the lodge bulged far out, and the Frenchmen, as well as I, exclaimed in astonishment as a fluttering mass of something that looked to be neither beast nor human, emerged from the structure and dashed through the firelight and came flying through the window.

A startled cry at the door caused my head to swing in that direction. Beauvais, now glaring at the table, was pointing a finger and yelling:

"Seize the Englishman! Braddock's spy!"

Several things were happening simultaneously which I can narrate only as separate incidents. My companions sat stupified as Beauvais called out, for even as he was sounding the alarm the muffled figure from the lodge rushed toward him and with a swing of a blanket extinguished the candles on that side of the room.

"The English spy!" hoarsely called Beauvais, and then went down with a crash as the muffled figure bowled him over and with a quick turn raked the candles from the wall behind me, leaving the illumination of the room confined to the light from the fires outside.

Beaujeu's brain resumed working.

"Treachery!" he screamed.

I heard his chair tip over as he sprang to his feet. But none at the table knew wherein lay the treachery as was proven by the failure of the company to lay hands on me. Or possibly all were so dumfounded they could not for the moment take intelligent action. Something crashed against my chair, and over went the table. I felt a muscular arm slip around my waist. A blanket fell over my head. The next moment we were tumbling through the window and into the midst of the pandemonium now reigning outside. I freed my face enough to see the Indians scattering and falling back from the lodge. Pontiac's voice was thundering—

"Surround the lodge!" But there was none among his followers who dared to draw close to the sacred structure.

My conductor pressed heavily on my shoulder and we went to our knees and crawled under a flap of the lodge, and the light from the fires in front briefly revealed the distorted face of Little Wolf. His red medicine-arrow was through his throat, the head and several inches of the shaft showing under his left ear.

"Ha-hum-weh!" chanted my rescuer.

The red arrow had been discharged in the medicine-lodge even as Little Wolf had prophesied, and it had found its way into a wolf, but not into the man of the Wolf clan as I had feared. We had no time to linger. From the uproar outside I assumed that the Indians were still bewildered and believing that the startling appearance of the muffled figure outside the lodge and its flight through the window was but the workings of the wizard's *manito*.

Even now, with the Frenchmen stumbling about in the commandant's house and calling for lights, with Beauvais madly shouting that there was an English spy inside the stockade, and with Pontiac darting among the terrified red men and fiercely exhorting them to catch my friend the Onondaga, we yet had time to take advantage of the confusion and make off into the darkness that encroached up to the rear of the lodge. Round Paw pulled the blanket over my head and drew his own covering closer, and seizing my arm raised the rear wall and pushed me before him.

"Run fast!" he hissed. "To the water-gate!"

Pontiac's voice thundered a command. The Onondaga muttered—

"The Ottawa chief tells his children to watch the gates and the stockade and kill any one trying to get out."

ONCE outside the lodge and we were in darkness. Thirty yards away and we had lost ourselves in a wild crowd of savages. But as we pressed on Pontiac's stentorian voice gradually reached an intelligence here and there; and from different points and in all the dialects of the northern and Ohio tribes, the word was passed to guard the stockades and gates. By the time we stole by the kitchen order was practically restored, and we could hear a French officer directing his soldiers to search every building. Torches began to wave and blaze as the warriors caught up the burning brands and rushed about the enclosure.

"Take the man Beland alive!" roared a voice; and I knew that Beauvais at last had connected my identity up with my French name and that Beaujeu now understood all.

"Why this way?" I asked the Onondaga as we reached the stockade on the river-front.

"Stand on my shoulders, white brother, and go over," he directed.

"There's the witch-woman——"

"She's on the other side. Shall we join her, or face about and die like chiefs?"

I scrambled to his shoulders and went to the top of the timbers. I reached down a hand, but scorning all assistance Round Paw swarmed over the barrier. The two of us dropped to the ground within a few feet of the river.

It was very dark and I was completely bewildered.

"This way, mister," called a low voice.

The Onondaga dragged me after him. My hand rested on a canoe.

"Who's there?" I whispered.

"Daughter of witches," was the half-laughing, half-sobbing reply. "But please don't stop to talk, mister."

It was time I scrambled into the canoe, for a chorus of yells was now raised on the other side of the stockade and only a few feet away. I tripped over a rifle as the Onondaga pushed the light craft into the current. I picked it up and found it familiar to my hands.

"Whose rifle is this?" I whispered.

"Hush!" cautioned the girl. And then proudly, "It's yours. I was at the door when the trouble began. I reached inside and took it when Mr. Beauvais commenced calling you a spy."

"Talk will kill us," grunted the Onondaga as he pushed a paddle into my hands and began working desperately to reach the slack water along the opposite bank. His warning was timely for I could hear the *plop*, *plop* of heavy bodies dropping over the stockade. I glanced back and found the top of the palisades standing outlined against the light behind them. There came an explosion of mad rage that made my heart wince. The Onondaga proudly informed us:

"They have found Little Wolf in the lodge. I crept under the wall and shot him with his own arrow. He made a choking noise. The Wolf man thought some of those outside would know the truth. There was Pontiac. He talks with ghosts and they tell him secrets. It was he who told Little Wolf to kill me. Pontiac saw me at Detroit and knew my heart was warm for the English. I heard them sniffing at my tracks.

"They could have made the kill, but Pontiac wanted his children to believe the ghosts were helping me by shooting me with the medicine-arrow. Little Wolf was to shoot me through the hole in the robes when I danced by. If my white brother had not been in danger I should have shot Pontiac after telling him to march by with the others."

"They are over the wall! They will take canoes and follow us!" I warned.

"Mister, I spoiled all the canoes I could find before going to the house where you was eating. They can't catch us with boats."

"You have done well, little woman. What does Round Paw do now?"

We were at the opposite shore.

"We will go up the river instead of down," he answered. "They will think we went down to the Ohio. If the man Beauvais had not come we would have shown them some new magic."

The canoe turned up-stream, hugging the bank close to escape the current. Back of us and across the river torches were bobbing up and down the shore while Indians and soldiers sought to man craft and run us down. But our canoe made no noise, and the river was dark. We heard boats put off in both directions, but they were on a blind chase and did not move with any confidence.

"You knew about Beauvais?" I asked Round Paw.

"The witch-woman told me. She asked my help. She waited outside the house to stop Beauvais from seeing you. It was the witch-woman who said we would leave by water. She was to be outside the stockade by the water-gate. She has a very strong medicine."

"So it was you who saved me, little woman," I said to her.

"Lor's sake! Don't believe nothing that Injun tells you. He saved you; not me. And now I can't go to Canada."

"Wait until after the war. It will be a short war," I told her, little realizing my fallability as a prophet.

"We must leave the river before the first light," spoke up the Onondaga. "Pontiac will lead the chase. He is a very great man. Round Paw's heart is heavy that he did not kill him. The Ottawa's *manito* will fight my *orenda*. It will try to eat it up. He knows we took to water. He will send men along both shores to find where our trail leaves the river. He will throw many men between us and Braddock. If the witch-woman takes to the air and flies like a bird then Round Paw and his brother can walk slowly and laugh at the wild Ottawas."

He was disappointed when I told him the girl could not fly like a bird and that any plans we made must include her. I told him of my efforts to shield Allaquippa's village from attack and expressed my fear that Beauvais would now do the thing I had convinced him he should not do. This furnished the Onondaga with a double errand to the Delaware village: he must warn the woman sachem and tell Cromit to carry my warning to the army that the Turtle Creek route, though rough, would be free from successful ambuscades.

"You will take the same talk, but separate from the bone-breaker," I added. "The woman and I will leave you at the mouth of Turtle Creek and follow it up for a bit and seek the army in that direction. Surely one of the three of us men will take the talk through to Braddock."

CHAPTER VIII

OUR ORENDAS ARE STRONG

HALF a mile below the mouth of Turtle Creek the Monongahela grew very shallow with scarcely more than a ripple of water in places. The three of us held a brief conference and decided that Round Paw should take the canoe to the western bank and make Allaquippa's town afoot. The girl and I waded to the eastern shore. The surrounding country was three or four hundred feet above the river level, rising in several gradual slopes of alluvial formation.

We left the river in the first gray light of morning and found ourselves confronted by a rich bottom of pebble mold, where the greatest care was necessary if we would not leave a trail. Had not the Dinwold girl been used to roaming the woods around Great Cove it would have been impossible for us to have avoided leaving tracks. Luckily she was well-versed in woodcraft, and by taking our time and advancing slowly, by taking advantage of prostrate tree-trunks and an occasional rock we finally gained a fair growth of walnut. There were no bushes, nor undergrowth, in this timber to impede our flight and betray our passing.

We ran swiftly, the girl's thin face revealing her determination not to hinder my progress by any display of weakness; and as we ran she spied out the country ahead while I kept watch over our back-track. Every time I glanced behind me I fully expected to behold a flitting form of a savage. We arrived at Turtle Creek, a short distance above its mouth, without hearing the Indians' cry of discovery.

We forded the creek and paused for a minute for her to rest. We were following my original plan of ascending the stream as far as Rush Creek, an eastern tributary, where we were quite confident of finding the head of the army. If for any reason the army had not advanced that far, or had changed its course, we were sure of cutting its long line of march.

Our breathing spell was terminated by a faint halloo. The voice came from far off, and as it was not repeated we did not agree as to the direction. The girl insisted it was north of us, while my ears placed it as coming from the northwest, at about the point on the Monongahela where we had abandoned the canoe. Thankful it was not ahead of us we resumed our flight. We had not proceeded more than fifty rods before the girl, who was in the lead, gave a little cry and came to a halt.

"Where?" I whispered, glaring about to find what had alarmed her.

"Among the bramble-bushes," she faintly replied, pointing her short rifle toward a thicket and pressing a hand to her side.

I saw it and directed:

"Go ahead a bit and wait for me."

It was no sight even for a border-bred woman to behold unless grim necessity compelled. After she had passed on I examined the dead man. He had been shot through the body and scalped. He was a Frenchman, for he wore the white uniform with black facings that distinguished the marines from the troops of the line, whose facings were blue. As the buzzards had not commenced to gather it was plain he must have met death twelve hours back, or in the evening. An ax was tightly gripped in the right hand and there was a gash in the handle where another blade had struck. In the darkness he and his assailant had fought blindly.

His slayer by this time was making back to Braddock's army to dance the scalp. I did not believe the man had been killed by one of his own Indians as none from the fort would have had time to reach the creek ahead of us. If he had been returning to the fort from a scout against the English he would not have separated from his red companions.

I overtook the girl, who was standing before a thick tangle of pea-vines and trailers. When I would have taken the lead in skirting this barrier she motioned for me to wait. Time was too precious to wait, but before I could say as much I heart a faint cry.

"I knew I heard it," she muttered. "But 't is only the howl of a wolf."

I had heard the wolf-pack howl in the middle of Winter, when starvation sent them hunting together through the snows.

"Indian lungs are behind that howl," I told her. "It's up the creek."

"You think a Injun made it, mister?"

The howl was repeated and sounded clearer.

"I'm positive," I said. As if to guarantee the certainty of my words the signal was answered on our left and again from the direction of the river.

"They are close after us," I whispered. "They're calling to each other to meet on this creek. They'll find our trail. There's but one way open; we must double back by the Frazier cabin, and, if sighted before we enter the forest below it, we can take shelter there and try to stand them off till night."

"If we can find the cabin we can make a good fight," she stoutly declared.

John Frazier, trader and blacksmith, was a stanch supporter of the English. He had served the colonies more than once as an interpreter, and before coming to the mouth of Turtle Creek had lived for twelve years at Venango, or until driven out by the French in 1753. He had been of assistance to Major Washington in 1754 and was commissioned a lieutenant in Trent's command when it was instructed to fortify the forks of the Ohio.

"I can find the cabin easy enough," I assured her, and we swung out from the creek and doubled back. As we ran we could hear the "wolves" howling from three points of the compass, their signals sounding clearer each minute and proving that several bands would soon come together at the creek. The rapidity of their advance surprized me, and I began to doubt the wisdom of proceeding farther toward the cabin. I feared we would be cut off and surrounded. To turn our backs to the creek and plunge through the dense forest and trust our lives to our legs appealed as being the best plan.

"Are you able to keep going all day through the forest?" I asked her.

"I am very tired," she confessed. "It's so long since I had a good sleep, mister. There was the night trip from the Injun town to the fort, and I didn't sleep hardly any there. There was last night——"

"I know," I broke in, for time was all too short. "You couldn't do it."

A glance at her pinched face told me she was fairly exhausted. And in our haste to make good time we had in spots left signs the savages could easily follow at a run.

"The cabin it must be," I said and trying to speak cheerfully. "Frazier will have plenty of powder and bullets. Perhaps some spare trade guns!"

"You could make it alone through the woods to the army," she said, her words coming in jerks.

"I can make it no faster than you can."

She halted and fiercely commanded:

"Find the army. The French and their Injuns won't hurt me. I'll tell 'em you and that Injun made me come along."

"Pick up your heels. Are you crazy? Little time you'd have to explain anything to red savages. The cabin is the best place I could make for even if I were alone."

"I'm thinking you're telling a lie, mister," she gravely rebuked, but resuming running.

A quavering cry up the creek made my skin prickle.

"Hang on to your rifle," I ordered as I seized her and threw her over my shoulder, holding her with one arm and carrying my own gun in my left hand. With a fine spurt of speed I covered several hundred yards. She began kicking and squirming, and demanded:

"Set me down! Set me down! Lor's heart, but you're strong, mister."

"And you're very light," I puffed; for she did not weigh more than a small boy.

"Set me down! You'll git us both kilt!"

I did as she requested, not because I was too weary to carry her farther, but because her rifle was swinging wildly and striking the bushes and leaving a trail an ox could follow.

"Keep ahead of me," I directed. "We're almost at the mouth of the creek and the cabin is close by."

FROM the opposite bank of the creek came a demoniac shout, and I believed we had been sighted. Yet the cry was different from a discovery-call. It was too ferocious. It was answered from several points. I no longer believed some scout far in advance of the main body had glimpsed us, for no bullets nor arrows were fired. The shouting was now general and being raised from one point. They had come upon the scalped Frenchman and were voicing their rage. I am convinced the dead man served us well by slowing up the pursuit until we had entered a natural opening, in the middle of which stood Frazier's cabin. The girl gasped and stumbled, and I almost fell over her. Once more I picked her up, this time carrying her cradled in my arms and then threw all my energy into my legs. Howls of triumph sounded in the woods behind me and on my right. Guns were fired, but I heard no sound of the lead. Arrows were loosed after us, cutting a high arc and landing point down in the grass.

"I'm all right! Let me down!" she begged.

But the goal was too near. The savages began to show at the end of the woods just as we gained the door, with me yelling for Frazier to open for us. There was no response and my heart sank as I pictured a locked door and the savages doing us to death while we made a last fight. Then my heart beat high as I beheld the rawhide latch-string. In another moment we were inside and I was thrusting my long rifle through a loophole. I spoiled a brawny Huron as he was scrambling back to cover.

"You're powerful strong, mister," the girl shyly remarked.

There was a quality in her voice I had never heard before, and I glanced at her in surprize. The face was enlivened with color. She threw off her hat and allowed her brown hair to tumble about her shoulders.

"You're a mighty brave little woman," I awkwardly replied. "We'll hope to get out of this. But we mustn't be taken alive."

"Lor's me! Fall into their dirty hands! Of course not."

And from her blouse she pulled forth a thirteen-inch Highland pistol, decorated with thistle-leaves along the frame, barrel and handle. I always held the Highland to be more showy than useful, as its light weight and large bore made it kick villainously and shoot inaccurately. Yet it would remove one very quickly from all fear of the torture-stake. Possibly she procured it while at Will's Creek. I did not ask her, as she had proven herself to be quite a hand to appropriate firearms.

I scanned the woods but could detect

no signs of life; nor was there any shouting. I took time to glance about the room, at the shelves and stock of trade-goods, at the smith's tools in the corner, and some guns hanging from one wall. In surveying the room I discovered a most vital necessity was lacking. There was no water in the cabin.

I picked up two kettles and unbarred the door.

"You mustn't go out!" she shrilly screamed.

"We must have water. The creek is near. The Indians haven't had time to circle around to the south of us. You have the two rifles. Watch from the back of the cabin. Don't fire unless more than one breaks cover."

"I'll follow!"

"Watch out for me."

TO BE CONCLUDED

THE INDIAN BOW

by Edwin L. Sabin

THE bow used by the Western Indian was in general short and thick—of length two and one-half to three and one-half feet, and upward of an inch in diameter at the grip or middle. Of course much depended upon the material.

The Southwest Indians such as the Apaches employed the mesquite wood and the mountain mulberry; the prairie Indians such as the Kansas and Otos and Kiowas employed the osage orange or "*bois d' arc,*" the ash and walnut; ash and hickory were favorite woods with the Sacs, Foxes, Winnebagos; the plains Indians such as the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahos, used imported osage orange, ash, hickory and native horn; the mountain Indians such as the Utes and Shoshones, and the Blackfeet of the northern plateaux used willow, spruce, fir, horn, etc.; desert Indians such as the Bannocks and Diggers used juniper, horn and willow; and the Northwest Indians of the coast regions were blessed with the American yew.

This list is not exhaustive; practically any straight-grain wood, whether soft or hard, even cottonwood, was adapted to the purpose when wrapped with sinew and backed with the same, glued tightly. Good bow stuff was a great article of trade.

The horn bows were highly prized. These were of buffalo horns, elk horns, mountain-sheep horn, and later cow horns, split down, the layers carefully glued together, the joints of the sections dovetailed or mortised and wrapped with sinew as closely as the wrappings of a split-bamboo rod.

These horn bows were of extraordinary elasticity and strength. Among the Blackfeet there were self-bows of horn, in one piece, two and one-half to three feet long, as white and as dense as ivory. The material was "medicine," but assumed to be the jawbone of a whale, procured from the Pacific coast.

Great care was taken of the bow. All wood, except—it is said—cedar, had first to be seasoned; then it was well shaped and rubbed down and treated with bear grease and buffalo tallow. The sinew or gristle backing, however, was left in the rough, like bark. The bow was kept, when not used, straight, in a skin case, to fit it.

Lieutenant George P. Belden, the "White Chief," who joined the Yankton Sioux, says that he has seen an arrow launched five hundred yards, and also has seen arrows shot entirely through the body of a buffalo back of the shoulders. But the effective range of the bow was under two hundred yards; its efficiency beyond one hundred yards was problematical; under one hundred yards an arrow was vicious; under fifty it was deadly.

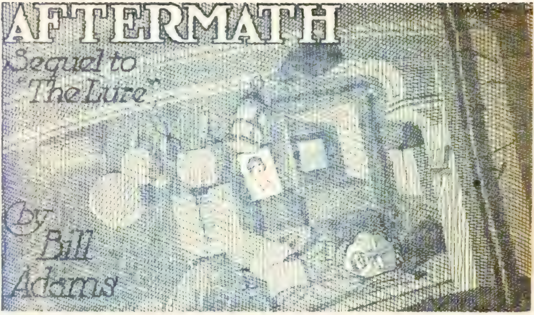
The Indian was less a sharp-shooter with the bow, than a rapid-fire shooter and a reasonably accurate shooter. By launching one arrow after another so quickly that five, eight and ten were in flight at one time, depending upon distance, he discounted the muzzle-loading rifle and the single-shot breech-loader. From horseback, at gallop, at moderate range he was just about as certain of hitting the mark somewhere as was the white man with the gun, taken by and large.

But in battle the Indian bowman would not long have withstood the English six-foot staves and cloth-yard shafts.

AFTERMATH

Sequel to "The Lure"

by Bill Adams



Author of "Twinkle Bright," "The Lure," etc.

"COPPER TOM" stood staring at a picture in his hand.

"W'ere will you 'ang it, Tom?" asked "Mud" Newlin, the boy from Gravesend.

Tom paid no heed to him at all.

"'Ow did she come to give it to you, Tom?" asked the boy; a freckle-faced boy of nineteen or thereabouts with green eyes and a discordant voice.

A big sailor, ear-rings in his ears, entered the forecastle.

Copper Tom made as if to hide the picture.

"'E don't care nohow. Gals don't worry 'im none," said Mud.

A voice from the deck without bellowing an order, the sailors hurried to the forecastle head to take in the tow-boat's line. The ship was already under topsails, and now as they gave her more sail the tug sped back toward harbor.

The last to leave the forecastle, Copper, before going to the deck, stayed to hang the picture on the bulkhead above his bunk.

"Maybe she'll bring you luck, Copper," said Mud, looking back as he stepped over the high doorsill.

By the dog watch the ship, under all sail, was slipping through blue seas. Gathered upon the hatch, the sailors talked of the shore and of the long passage. The ear-ringed sailor sat upon the bulwarks, his face toward the windward sea.

"Copper," said one, "wot will you swap for that there picture?"

Copper, grinning, swore foully at him.

A sailor laughed aloud, and the bosun, passing, stayed to stare at him.

"Wot is the joke?" he asked.

"Copper says as Vernie's his'n," said the sailor.

The bosun grinned pleasantly at Copper Tom.

"Wot did you give 'Ear-Ring' for her picture, Tom?" he asked.

Copper Tom, cursing most blasphemously, kicked savagely at Mud, who, edging away from him, winked to the bosun.

"'E took it out o' Ear-Ring's bunk w'ere Vernie left it, bos," said he.

The bosun looked inquiringly at Copper Tom, and from him to the sailor on the bulwarks.

"Ear-Ring don't 'ave no use fer a gal," said Mud tantalizingly as if he spoke *at* Copper Tom.

"Tom," queried the bosun, "wot did you give Ear-Ring for the picture, eh?" and, getting no reply, made as if to approach the sailor on the rail.

Several sailors laughed, and one said:

"Aftermath," copyright, 1923, by B. M. Adams.

"Vernie came aboard just afore we pulled out from the wharf, bos, looking to find Ear-Ring, an' he was gone ashore. She left her picture in his bunk for him. She's crazy for him, bos."

"She is? How so?" asked bos.

"She challenged him to dance her for those ear-rings, and dancing he beat her, and danced her down. That makes a woman mad for any man," the sailor said.

"Love's a rum deal," the bosun answered, and continued on his forward way.

"Copper, was you ever in love?" asked Mud teasingly of the red-haired sailor on the hatch.

Copper Tom scowled, looking across the sea, where star trails glimmered twinklingly.

Rising, two sailors went to the forecastle, and, standing a moment by Copper's bunk, looked at the picture of the woman on the bulkhead.

"Eyes like a snake," said one.

"She's smilin'," said the other, filling his pipe.

A tiny figure appeared between the two sailors, an ugly yellow face gazing up at the picture above them.

"Allee same fine gel," said the owner of the yellow face.

The lamp flickered, the ship rolling heavily.

"I t'ink makee muchee dance," said the yellow man, and, turning away, was in a moment gone.

LEANING in his galley doorway, the ship's cook talked with Copper Tom.

"I makee fix for you," said the little yellow man, grinning eagerly up into the other's face.

Departing to the now deserted forecastle, Copper Tom took the picture from above his bunk; hiding it under his jumper.

The ship's bells clanged, and the sailors gathered on the quarterdeck.

On his way aft Copper Tom, stopping at the galley door, showed the picture to the cook.

"Allight, I fixee for you," said the cook, and, taking the picture from the other's hand, hung it with eager fingers upon the bulkhead above his coal-locker; smiling up at it with hunger unappeased while the sailor continued his way aft.

"WOT'S come o' the picture o' your gal?" asked a sailor next morning of Copper Tom.

Looking sidewise at Copper, Mud laughed quietly, a sneer on his freckled face.

"Ear-Ring took it from 'im," he said, adding, "I wouldn't let no feller take no picture out o' *my* bunk."

"Copper, 'ow come it 'doctor' give you so much dry hash today?" a sailor asked.

Copper scowled a speechless reply, while Mud, laughing aloud, said:

"Copper 'as a stand-in wiv the gals an' wiv the doctor too. Copper is a dandy sailor; ain't ye, Copper?"

Copper arose, and, grasping the lad by the throat, beat his open face with a bare hand.

The boy, wriggling, cursed at the red-haired sailor and grinned despite the blows. Releasing him, Copper took his seat again in silence; too savage for speech. Blinking at Copper, the boy mopped his face with a blue handkerchief.

"I wisht I was as good-lookin' as Copper," he said.

"You 'ad best 'ave a care, my son. You will get wot you ain't lookin' for," said a sailor.

While Tom was pounding the boy the ear-ringed sailor left the forecastle, and, going to the deck, stared over the sea.

"She give Ear-Ring 'er picture, an' Tom stole it. Poor Tom!" said the boy, and, springing away as the infuriated Tom made for him, escaped through the door.

"You—you young lubber!" said the bosun, meeting him on deck. "Get up a sack o' coal from the forepeak hatch an' dump it in the doctor's coal-locker—get along now."

Mud disappeared below, down the forepeak hatch, underneath the forecastle head. Laboriously raising a sack of coal to the deck above, he hove it to his shoulder and bore it to the galley.

"Well, I'll *be*!" he exclaimed under his breath, staring, perplexed, at the picture on the bulkhead; the cook gone aft to the cabin.

"Bos," he said, meeting the bosun at the sail-locker hatch a minute later, "doctor's got one o' they pictures o' Vernie, too. Fancy sharin' a gal wiv a man wot's got a yaller skin, eh?"

At noon Copper Tom, coming down from aloft in time to be at the galley door ahead of any one else, winked at the cook, who, expressionless, handed him a hunk of cold duff. Placing the duff within his jumper, he took the men's dinner forward. His shipmates stared at him, grinning, and whispering amongst themselves; Tom conscious that they did so.

Mud Newlin made a remark to the sailor beside him, who, looking at Copper, guffawed loudly. Scowling, Copper glanced up, but, restraining a quick anger, took a seat at the table.

A large fellow, reaching forward, drew the hash-kid from in front of Copper Tom to help himself.

"Aye, that's it, Udell! Let's us w'ite men eat first. I ain't not fancyin' to eat wiv no yaller man," said the boy.

Copper sprang to his feet, and, purple in the face, rushed at young Mud.

"You 'ad best be watchin' out, young Mud," said a sailor as, Copper at his heels, the boy ran through the door and was gone.

In a moment Copper returned, and, sitting down, scowling at Udell, drew the hash-kid to himself.

There was a laugh in the doorway, and the boy, his hand outstretched, showed them all a large piece of duff.

"'E dropped it on the deck—'is yaller brother give it to 'im," said Mud.

Copper, in speechless fury, stared at the duff as the boy, stepping into the forecastle, placed it upon the table.

"I'm 'ungry, but not fer me! I ain't eatin' wiv no yaller man," he said, his green eyes watching Copper's savage face.

IT WAS the dog watch, and the men sat about the hatch, talking and puffing at their pipes. The ear-ringed sailor was at the wheel, the boy upon the forecastle head on the lookout. The breeze was light, the blue sea darkening to starry purple below a sky quite cloudless and faintly lighted yet in the low west by fading crimson.

Light passing, star-glooms rested upon the ocean. The sailors talked in low voices of wreck and of swift passages from port to port. Copper Tom, arising, went to the forecastle and, entering at the side, passed through that small dwelling of the crew. Leaving it by the forward door, he passed round the end of the house, turned back along the deck, and, unobserved by his comrades, who sat facing the lee sea, silently made his way to the galley.

He entered the galley noiselessly, the cook, seated upon the coal-locker paring potatoes, looking up at him from bloodshot eyes. Directly above the cook's head was the picture.

For a moment they stared at each other in silence.

"No likee come sailor in galley," said the cook.

Scowling, Copper Tom stared at him, and from him to the picture.

"Doc," he said, "I wants that there picture back."

The cook made no reply to that, saying only—

"More better you go."

"I'm a-goin' to call off that there deal, doctor," said the other. "I don't want no more o' your grub. I'll 'ave that gal back," and he made as if to take the picture down.

The cook, seizing a meat-chopper from the shelf beside him, sprang to his feet, his eyes hateful.

"You go," he said.

Copper Tom, his own knife in the sheath at the back of his belt, stared at the chopper in the yellow man's hand. Without a word he left the galley.

The cook, glancing at the picture above him, continued to pare potatoes.

Copper Tom went forward, passing behind the men upon the hatch. Entering the forecastle, he took his pipe from below his pillow, and, lighting it, proceeded to the forecastle head.

The boy, seeing a figure rise from the gloom below, recognized Copper by the glow of the lighted pipe.

"Ain't it the fine night, though; eh, Mister Tom?" he said, his voice fawning.

Copper Tom leaned against the rail at the break of the forecastle head, and, taking the pipe from his lips, spat into the sea to leeward.

"Was you born to Gravesend?" he asked.

"Aye," replied the boy, and added, "W'ere was you born, Mister Tom?"

Copper Tom, who knew nothing of his birth or parentage, again spat to leeward.

"Round Stepney way," said he.

"I didn't mean no 'arm, Mister Tom, in the fo'csle," said the boy.

"'S all right—no 'arm. Bit o' fun, I know," replied the sailor. "'Ave a bit o' duff," he added, and, taking the cold duff from within his jumper, offered it to the boy, who, accepting it, ate ravenously.

"That's good," he said, licking the crumbs from his lips.

"Plenty more," said the sailor.

"I wisht I 'ad your stand-in," said the boy.

The sailor smoked in silence, the boy hunched against the rail beside him.

Presently Copper Tom, taking the pipe from his lips, again spat vigorously into the sea.

"A fine night, ain't it?" he said, and was silent again.

"Mud," he said presently in a low voice, "will ee do a little job fer me?"

"Wot is it, Mister Tom?" asked the boy, looking up to the other's eyes, which gleamed in the pipe's glow.

"Go git my gal's pictur' offen the galley bulkhead an' give it to me," said Copper Tom.

"W'y don't you git it, Mister Tom?" asked the boy.

"That yaller —— won't let me 'ave it," replied the sailor.

" 'Ow come 'e to ever 'ave it?" asked the boy.

"I was part drunk an' give it 'im. 'E give me the duff this mornin' tryin' ter put it right wi' me," said Copper Tom.

"Wot makes they yaller-bellies allers want a w'ite gal, Mister Tom?" asked the boy.

"Yaller natur'. Will ee git me that there pictur' on the quiet?" answered Copper.

"Doctor sleeps in th' galley. I'd 'ave to git it w'en 'e was asleep," said the boy. "Wot will ee give me, Mister Tom?"

"I'll give ee two poun' o' chewin'-baccy," said Copper Tom.

"Mister Tom, I 'ates this 'ere lookout. Will ee keep lookout fer me w'en my next turn comes?" asked the boy.

"Aye—three times if ye like," replied Copper.

"All right. I'll git yer pictur' for ye," said the boy.

" 'Ere," said the sailor, thrusting a small square of chewing-tobacco into the boy's hand.

The boy gnawed off a hunk.

"You keep lookout, an' I will see wot I kin see," he said, and noiselessly left the forecastle head.

Passing behind the seamen seated on the hatch, he went direct to the galley door.

" 'Ow comes it, doctor? Do they treat ye pretty well?" he asked.

From his seat on the coal-locker the cook looked up at him.

"Wot wantee, boy?" he asked.

"Don't want nothin', doc. I don't bother none as don't bother me," the boy replied.

Making as if to turn away, he stopped suddenly, staring at the picture, and, grinning amicably to the cook, asked—

"You likee my sister, doc?"

The cook was upon his feet, gazing at the boy.

"My gel allee same you sisiter?" he asked, his mouth fallen open, his eager eyes upon the other's careless face.

"Yep! You bet she is, doc She ain't a bad little kid, eh?" said the boy.

His eyes upon the white girl's picture, the cook opened a drawer, and, taking from it a slab of duff, handed it to the boy.

"Thankee, doctor. That looks good ter me. I'm allers 'ungry, doc. Seems like I can't never git enough ter eat," said the boy.

The cook grinned.

"I fixem," said he.

"W'ere she give ye 'er pictur', doc?" the boy asked.

The cook, looking at him, smiled delightedly, his yellow features contorted by desire.

"Heap fine gel, you sisiter," said he.

Answered at once by the iron bell at the break of the forecastle head, the brass bell on the poop clanged down the decks; the sailors gathering for muster on the quarter-deck. The little cook going aft to see the ship's steward, Mud walked with him, till, beside the main hatch, pretending to strike a ring-bolt with his bare foot, he stopped, and, cursing, nursed a bruised toe.

"W'ere's that boy?" snarled the mate from the bridge.

" 'E's on lookout, sir," said a sailor.

"No, 'e ain't. Tom's on lookout," said another.

The mate called the boy's name.

"I'm 'ere, sir," said the boy, appearing suddenly as if he came from forward.

"Then why didn't you say so? What d'ye think this is?" growled the mate.

"I thought as 'ow I seed a light, mister, an' went to arst lookout if 'e 'ad seed it," said the boy.

"You get aft at eight bells, or I'll fix you," growled the mate.

"Aye, aye, sir," said the boy smartly.

The men went forward, a hand going to the poop to relieve the wheel, and another to the lookout. Copper Tom came aft along the deck.

The cook, reentering his galley and seeing no picture on the bulkhead, stared at its vacant place; then, seizing the chopper from a shelf, his face distorted with rage, he stepped soft-footed to the deck.

"All's well, sir. Wilkins on the lookout, sir," said the voice of Copper Tom on the quarterdeck, reporting to the mate.

The ear-ringed sailor, relieved at the wheel, walked forward behind him.

Close together, they passed a little shape that crouched unseen on the deck below the main fiferail. Rising after they were gone by, it followed them forward.

The boy, cat-eyed, standing under the fore rigging, the picture in his jumper pocket, saw the little figure.

"Wot is it, doc, ol' man?" he muttered to the yellow cook.

"You come. I tellee you," whispered the cook, and led the way aft to the galley.

"My watch below, doc, an' I will 'ave to turn in," said the boy. "Be quick, ol' son."

Entering the galley, the cook took a pie from the locker.

"You takee, boy. I fixem, see?" he said.

"You're all right, doctor," said the boy, eagerly seizing the pie.

"Sailor feller steal you sisiter picture, see?" said the cook. "You ketch 'em for me, boy, see? I fixem for you," he added, his face most hateful.

The boy, his mouth open, looked at the bulkhead.

"That big feller done that, doctor. 'E's arter my sister, too," said he.

"Big faller? I t'ink Tom faller stealee him," said the cook.

"No fear! Big feller stealee, doc. He allee same want my sister," said the boy.

"You ketchem for me, boy?" asked the cook.

"'E's awful big, that feller wiv the ear-rings, doc. I'll see wot I kin do," the boy replied.

He went forward, and, paying no heed to any one, turned into his bunk and fell immediately asleep.

IN THE dark of night a whistle, shrilling along the deck, called the watch.

"All hands on deck!" bellowed the mate, and lights shone instantly from the forecastle ports.

"Get the idlers out! Get ev'ry one!" the skipper shouted.

"Call 'em all! Bosun, an' 'Chips,' an' 'Sails,' " bellowed the mate.

"Will I call the yeller cook?" a sailor questioned, laughing.

"Hell's thunder's coming! Call all hands!" roared the mate as fury, sweeping from the midnight, caught the ship with a great spread of sail upon her, and, throwing her down, held her, strained and complaining, deep in the sea to leeward, her rail dipping lower and lower till her whole length was low.

Orders were screamed and answers bellowed back, mingled with cries and curses, while sails cracked in the inkiness above and steel chains clattered against the hollow topmasts. Rain drenched upon her and upon her sailors, hissing above the wind, beating the waves down; madness seething all about, and everything unseen in utter blackness.

For a brief space, as if stunned by the blow, she lay down—weighted by the pressure in her sails. Her topgallantsails, the halyards thrown off their pins, the wind holding them rigid, refused to lower. Topmast staysails, sheets and halyards gone, slatted horribly, the sheet-blocks, thrashing on the rails and house-tops, threatening destruction to any coming near them. Voices ceased, all men waiting doom.

The squall passing, a torrent of curses and blasphemy broke loose, commands and answers swiftly following one the other. The topgallants slid down to the topmast heads, and the ship, steadying herself, arose.

Some of the hands hurried aloft to furl topgallants, while, the night still ominous with mystery, others stood by at the topsail halyards.

The ship raced under topsails and foresail.

Lambent flames shot by her, faintly illumining faces half-seen beneath the webby rigging, and were gone instantly astern. A wedge of phosphorus tossed constant round her forefoot. A whirlpool of green flame sucked, eddying, beneath her counter.

At the main topsail halyards the ear-ringed sailor stood, waiting the order to lower. Behind him, crouched below the lee of the midship house, the yellow sea-cook waited, a hand beneath his black jacket, his baggy trousers wind-blown round his spindle legs.

Under the lee of the forward house, sheltered from the wind, stood Mud Newlin and Copper Tom.

Sea-fire faint upon their faces, they recognized each other.

"Did ye git it, lad?" growled Copper Tom into the boy's ear.

"Ear-Ring 'as got it, mister," said the boy.

"Ear-Ring 'as got it? *'Ow?*" the other queried.

"'E must 'a' took it w'en 'e was goin' forrard from th' w'eel," said the boy.

Copper Tom was silent for a space.

"Wot did the yeller —— say?" he asked presently.

"'E thought as 'ow you 'ad stole it, Tom," the boy replied.

"'E'll knife me in the dark!" swore the other.

"No fear! I put 'im wise, an' 'e knows 'oo 'as got it," said the boy.

The wind easing, the ear-ringed sailor moved from the topsail halyards. The yellow man, staring into the blackness, did not see him go; but, perceiving dimly the bulk of the two big three-fold halyard blocks and the seven-fold rope between them, took all that bulk for the figure of the man for whom he watched and waited. Crouched low upon the deck, he crept toward that shape he took for man, and, his hand uplifted, made to smash it with the chopper.

An approaching squall soughed from the heart of darkness. A flame illumined the flying ship, purple lightning flashing over the wild sea.

"You fool! Hold on there!" roared a voice, and the mate, hurling himself upon the tiny yellow man, flung him to the washing scuppers. The cook fell heavily, lying as if stunned with the chopper in his hand.

"One of you white men get here!" the mate commanded, his voice more noisy than the wind itself. "Stand by these halyards! There are squalls about. Stand by to lower—*but cut nothing!*" he added, as Copper Tom, hearing the order, came to stand at the halyards, the fall in his hand.

All hands blinded by the sudden flame, the night was intense about them. The mate returned to watch her from the bridge.

Rising, the cook crawled to the lee of the deck-house, and, peering toward the rigging, sought to find the form of the ear-ringed sailor.

Close to the topsail halyards, Copper Tom, standing upon a mooring-bollard, peered beyond the rail into the surrounding darkness, his form, dimly outlined by leaping phosphorescence, seeming as the form of a giant. The sea-fires fading, darkness was solid. The cook, crouched on the deck, had seen the one he sought—a huge sailor standing before him, his sheath-knife in the sheath at his back.

There came a lull, blocks whining, and canvas a-flap in the high night above.

Leaving the chopper upon the deck, the cook crept forward.

An instant later canvas banged tight in a quick puff, and, the sound of sea and sail stifling all lesser sounds, gliding back to the lee of the deck-house, the cook picked up the chopper and was gone.

Beneath the forecastle head Mud Newlin, striking a match, looked from lusting eyes upon the pictured face of a girl, while above and all about the great sea rumbled by.

"Wot is it, Mud?" asked a sailor, unsuspectedly at his side, looking over the shoulder of the startled boy. "'Ow did you git Copper's gal?"

The match was out, and the boy, slipping the picture in his pocket, gone.

DAWN breaking above a swept, impatient ship, the mate saw a figure lying outstretched and motionless, face downward in the lee scuppers, the sea lapping over and about it.

One ragged hole in that dead seaman's jumper seemed no more than any sailor, clad in rags, might wear, and, lifting the dead man up, they bore him away to the sail-maker's locker for his shrouding.

Staring down upon him, his shipmates talked together.

"A sea knocked pore Tom down an' bashed 'im on th' bollards, eh?" said one.

They spoke of men whom they had seen thus killed by the great, forceful sea's brutalities.

"Look at 'im, Mud! 'Ave ever you seed a cold, dead man afore? Well, you'll see many another, lad!" said one.

The boy, white-faced, unable to look upon the pallid dead, went fear-eyed away.

The sail-maker, easing clean canvas about the dead man's back, uttered a sudden cry:

"My God! Look 'ere!"

A man well used to all the ways of the grim sea, white-whiskered, with a furrowed face, he paled before the sailors; holding high a hand with outspread fingers—blood upon them.

"Murder! Bloody murder!" cried a sailor.

Crowding together in a scared company, they hustled forth, hastening aft to the quarterdeck, the sail-maker ahead of them, his hand held high.

The ship, the ear-ringed sailor's hands upon her racking wheel, raced, steady, through a following sea.

"What?" asked the mate, bending down from the bridge.

Speechless, they gathered below, staring up at him, the sail-maker in their midst reaching a red hand upward.

"What? You fools, what?" the mate demanded.

"Bloody murder!" said a sailor.

The skipper came, incredulous, to look upon them.

A sailor drew one of his comrades aside to whisper in his ear.

"'E ain't 'ere. W'ere is 'e?" asked that comrade.

They spoke in whispers, and, going to the accommodation ladder, approached the skipper on his bridge.

"What?" asked the skipper.

"Young Mud, sir—we seed 'im wiv pore Copper's gal's pictur' in 'is 'and, sir, back in th' middle o' the night—an' 'e was all light-eyed an' queer-lookin', sir," said one of them.

The skipper and the mate descended to the quarterdeck, and, questioning them, ordered the boy fetched aft.

White-faced and horrified, the boy stood amidst them all.

"Who gave you those bruises on your face, boy?" asked the skipper.

Blanched as the ship's high topsails, the boy cried out—

"I ain't done nothin', sir—not nothin'!"

The sea-cook appeared, curious and amused, from his warm galley.

Serene he stood amidst them all, taking no particular heed of anything or of any one; a little, yellow, bored fellow who could not let himself be troubled by these white men's oddities.

"Me likee white gel—me give Mister Sailor Tom duff. He give me gel," he grinned placatingly.

They held the boy while a sailor, opening his blue jumper, took out the port girl's picture.

"Doctor," said the boy, "ain't I told you as 'ow she were my sister?

"She were my sister, mister," he almost shrieked, turning imploringly and terrified toward the watchful skipper.

"Boy say gel allee same he sisiter. I no know," said the cook, looking amusedly at the boy.

"She's my sister—I tol' doctor all about it jest a bit ago. You arst doctor, sir! You arst doctor!" cried young Mud Newlin.

"Lock him in the after paint-locker, sir," said the skipper to the mate.

They locked him in until there should be time for further thought and questioning.

A sailor passed the picture to the little yellow man, who, grinning, took it.

"I putee him in galley—maybe fetchem luck," said he, and turned toward his galley; none noticing the lust in his dull eyes; nor yet the look of hate he cast at young Mud Newlin, being led away.

The forecastle hands talked loudly together, the skipper watching and listening to them.

"Wilkins, do you know aught of Mud?" asked one.

"Aye. 'E be a orphan wot never 'ad no father," replied the man addressed.

"I knowed 'is ol' woman—knowed 'er well," he added, leering knowingly.

"Did she 'ave more'n jest young Mud?" questioned another.

"No. Nor wouldn't she 'ave 'ad 'im could she 'ave 'elped 'erself," said Wilkins.

"'E ain't got no sister then," another said.

"W'y, no! 'Ow could 'e 'ave?" replied another.

Turning, the skipper walked toward the poop.

"Leave him locked in there, sir. You'd best leave the port wide open too, sir. There's turpentine and oil and paint in there, and he might suffocate. The weather's coming warm," he said.

Going forward, the men talked of Copper Tom and of young Mud, his murderer.

"That's wot come o' worryin' ol' Copper so. 'E's got it now," said one.

"Aye. Both on 'em 'as got it now," said another.

IN THE galley the little yellow man hung up the picture, grinning into the white girl's eyes.

"WE'LL bury him tomorrow, sir," the skipper said. "The wind may fall by then so that we can lay her to. Now that the wind is fair and strong we'd best let her fly."

NIGHT fell, dark and starless; a wind, hauling steadily ahead, keeping the mate and sailors busy at the braces.

The long song of "haul-away-oh" rose upon the night; the shrill complaint of many blocks mingling with the flap of canvas, as, boarding the main tack, they gave her more sail; setting topgallantsails and royals too.

Toward six bells a sailor at the fore topgallant halyards singing, "Roll the Cotton Down," a tiny shape sped aft.

Listening a moment without the open port-hole of the paint-locker, it seized the rim of the port and in another instant had swung head and shoulders through the opening. Tarantula-like, yet more baneful, the little sea-cook dropped, careful-footed, to the deck within and, hunched, waited, listening for a sleeper's breathing.

There was a moan, sudden and as suddenly stifled, the light sound of a scuffle that ceased as it began; then stillness, complete and tangible.

From far forward came the lifted chorus of a chantey. Unseen by any one, the cook dropped upon the quarterdeck, and, staying an instant to close tightly the port of the paint-locker behind him, crouching low, sped, invisible, back whence he had come.

A minute afterward a sailor sang a chantey at the main royal halyards.

"Ain't it the dark night, eh?" said a voice when the mate cried, "Belay!"

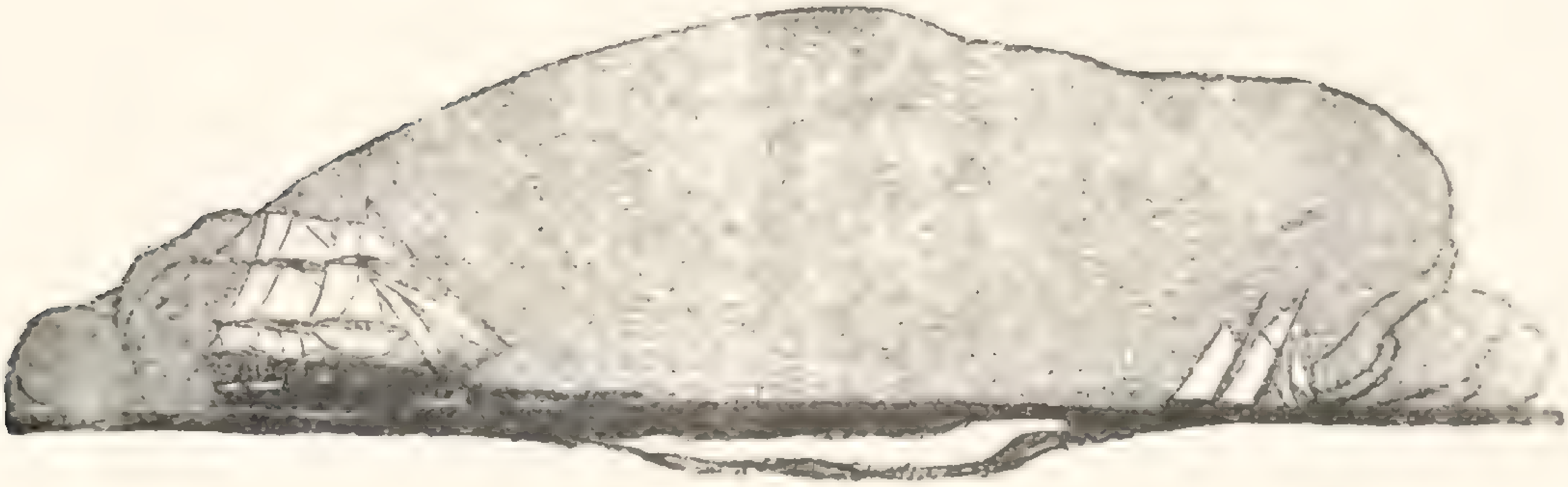
Striking a match, a sailor leaned in through the open galley door to light his pipe.

"Look 'ere, boys," he said, holding the match high.

Several sailors, peering in, stared down upon a tiny yellow man, who, curled on the coal-locker directly beneath the picture of a girl, lay sound asleep.

"Eyes like a snake," said one, looking at the picture.

"She's smilin'," said another.



ANGEL FACE

by J. D. Newsom

Arthur Schneider

Author of "The Khan's Gift," "The Supercargo," etc.

ARTHUR FAULKNER was shockingly well educated. At six-and-twenty he was incompetent to earn his own living, but he had a fund of Greek and Latin tags at his command and his knowledge of early Persian literature astonished his dearest friends.

A cruder civilization might not have tolerated his existence, but the money left him by his ship-building father allowed him to lead a secluded life far removed from the vulgar world. He lived in an atmosphere which he deemed ascetic, but which in reality was made up of silk dressing-gowns, pale-blue hangings, well-bound books and a faint lavender smell.

He admired Arthur Faulkner intensely and never tired of his society, except on rare occasions when having composed some polished translation of "Al-Mawardi" or Ibn Faris Ar-Razi's poems he would summon a chosen few to listen and politely comment thereon.

Strange as it may seem, he had not always been devoted to flowered kimonos and smoke-blue hangings. At the tender age of twelve he had been expelled from school because of his tendency to bruise the eyes and punch the noses of his fellow-students. Also he had occupied a seat at the bottom of the class where he slumbered contentedly, indifferent to pleadings and remonstrances. Then his parents died and two maiden aunts wrapped his mind in cotton-wool and handed him over to the care of a tutor who knew a good thing when he chanced upon it.

Arthur Faulkner, it must be confessed, became a pedant and a prig, an insufferable pedant and a miserable prig. The maiden aunts were charmed, Aubrey Sheuster, the tutor, was satisfied and the great outside world roared by indifferent to and unaware of the delicate flower nurtured in its midst.

Then one cold morning in October Aubrey Sheuster awoke to the sudden realization that he wasn't getting anywhere and that life was becoming intolerably dull. This introspective mood was in large measure due to a lingering taste in his mouth and a general feeling of aching lassitude about his limbs.

The night before he had left Arthur to dine alone while he betook himself to a lecture, but strangely enough he missed his way between Liverpool Street station and the Albert Hall and, finding himself suddenly confronted by the Café Monico he had allowed his feet to carry him within its gilded portals.

He had met some acquaintances, he remembered. At about midnight, when he had missed the last train, one "Cadger"

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Watson had called him a "pious faced fraud" and a "miserable old woman." There had been a most unholy row.

In fact, at the moment he was resting on an extremely hard board in a very small room the door to which was a massive affair of iron bars and bolts. He yawned and rubbed his long chin between his thumb and forefinger. He must be in jail!

How monotonously alike all these government buildings were. No imagination! The same narrow board, the same whitewashed walls, the same strip of gray felt which policemen called a blanket because they knew no better. He sat up gingerly and smiled a cheerful greeting at the strolling blue-coated warden.

"May I make so bold as to inquire which of His Majesty's jails shelters me at the present moment?" he inquired in a bland, deep voice.

"Bow Street," grunted the warden.

"Indeed!" mused Sheuster. "Indeed—how remarkable! I am in what might be termed an *impasse*, or a pickle—I can actually taste the brine."

The bewildered officer passed on out of sight down the echoing corridor, and Sheuster devoted himself to polishing his boots with the all-felt blanket until they shone brightly. This done he adjusted his crumpled tie, propped the folded cover behind his back and pulled from his hip-pocket a dog-eared copy of Lucian's "Dialogues."

He tried to read, but within a few minutes the barred door swung open and he found himself being marched down a passage towards the courtroom between two broad-shouldered constables.

"How familiar and homely are these surroundings," he murmured confidentially to his right-hand escort. "But don't you find the smell of creosote disgusting at this early hour?"

"Wait until the 'beak' sees you," gloomily prophesied the policeman. "He's a new one. What he won't do to you won't be worth doing."

The magistrate raised astonished eyebrows when he caught sight of Sheuster in the dock. He saw a spare, stooping man of scholarly appearance with a long, pale face where brown eyes twinkled sardonically.

"Drunk and disorderly," snapped the new broom when the sergeant had droned the charge. "Astonishing! A man of your obvious standing! Disgraceful! Two guineas and costs or ten days."

"Circumstances over which I have no control—" began Sheuster, fumbling in his pocket.

"Or ten days," repeated the magistrate.

Suddenly a stocky man in a green ulster and a tweed cap bustled forward.

"Here y'are, y'r honor, I'll fork out."

When the necessary formalities were completed Sheuster left the courtroom with his friend and they walked slowly through the busy London streets.

"How kind you are, my dear Cadger," murmured Sheuster, his queer, half-ironical smile plying about his lips. "As I remember the course of events we parted in anger in the middle of Piccadilly Circus. I struck you a doughty blow in the face——"

"Yeh," grunted Cadger Watson, a man of few words. "You did."

He turned a black-rimmed eye towards his companion.

"I want to finish that *tête-à-tête*."

"Really," protested Sheuster, "I am not sufficiently stimulated to do battle. And I must return to my nest. I shall have to lie stupendously to explain my overnight absence. My charge will be restless without me."

"That's all fixed," said the astonishing Mr. Watson. "I sent a telegram when they copped you last night. Said you were detained."

Stopping in the middle of crowded Oxford Circus Sheuster raised pious hands to the smoky skies.

"Palamedes spared by Ulysses! I have been faced by the same grave predicament on previous occasions but never has a friend——"

"Get on to the sidewalk," advised Watson, "or we'll be run over."

"What I got to say is confidential," he went on later when they were safely seated at a small table in Messrs. Tigers' tea-room where the orchestra begins to play at 10 A. M.

"Charming example of flat-footed womanhood," cheerily commented Sheuster, his mouth full of buttered toast, as his eyes came to rest on the ankles of a uniformed waitress. "If you were to ask me to define beauty——"

"I'm not," retorted the aggrieved Watson. "And as I got you out of clink, just bend your ear this way and forget the dames."

"Anchorite," drawled Sheuster.

"*Will* you listen," moaned his companion.

"I am, as you suggested, all ears."

"Well, it's this way. Last night you said you had a comfortable job and no cause to complain, but when I asks you what you're getting out of it—why you has to admit that it's next door to nothing. Tutor to a poor orphan of twenty-six!" He became scornful. "One of these days he'll grow up all of a sudden and you'll find yourself drawing out-of-work dole."

"Yestereve I should have demolished you for making such a statement," nodded Sheuster, "but in the sobering light of dawn I feel more kindly disposed. To be concise, I don't think I shall lose what you term my job. The ladies of the *ménage* adore me, and my charge depends upon my vicarious erudition. When my tutorial days are over I shall perhaps become the family butler or be pensioned off. At all events I shall be able to say that I have scrupulously obeyed the Misses Faulkner's orders and have eradicated from my charge the last vestige of stirring manhood."

"You're ambitious," snorted Watson. "Why don't you make some cash while you're still young and then live like a gent."

"An inadequate term," Sheuster sighed. Then, maddeningly, he again changed the conversation. "In my pocket I have two battered pennies and a return ticket to Basingstoke—also much battered. Since you have already advanced me the two guineas claimed by the Law and paid for this repast, will you also indulge me in a cigaret and a glass of cold water? This will bring nearer the coy waitress and place me still further at your mercy."

When the blue smoke began to ascend ceilingwards Watson doggedly took up the thread of his discussion.

"What I gotta say is this: Make a pile *now* and get out. It come over me all of a sudden, last night when I see you sitting there in the Monico looking like a parson in pink tights."

"Crude—very," drawled Sheuster. "You are suggesting that I commit some crime, no doubt with your connivance, and then flee with the loot. How low I must have fallen since I took my Master's degree at Manchester! I was a sunny-faced youth in those days, even if I had a penchant for slow ponies and——"

"I know all that," nervously whispered Watson. "This is the idea. Your little marvel Faulkner has got a good wad, so have his aunts from what you were saying last night. Suppose he disappeared, hey? Would they pay?"

"O-o-o!" Sheuster sank back in his chair, his long face quivering with mirth. "I have known you quite some time, my dear Cadger, but I never suspected that your fertile brain would evolve such a scheme."

"Well, it has," Watson asserted defensively. "I'm a wonder when it comes to thinking things out."

"A wonder! Why, you are a freak!" beamed Sheuster. "No, no!"

He held up a placating hand as Watson scowled.

"No offense meant. Enlighten me further."

"You're too —— funny," growled Watson. "But listen. I got a small house in Devonshire. It's out on the moors, miles from anywhere. An uncle of mine used to raise sheep or something out there. He left me the place when he pegged out. No good to me. I went down last month to look at it and it gave me the creeps for fair. Talk about isolation! Stone farmhouse, big wall, no road, just a track and scenery every which way you look.

"Now, just suppose you get gentle Arthur into an automobile and drive him down there. He disappears. Then we sit tight and tell the old ladies to pay ten thousand or their precious one joins the angels."

Sheuster, a far-away look in his eyes, put the package of cigarets in his pocket and pushed back his chair.

"Well thought out," he murmured. "We must keep in touch. I do believe it could be worked. However, we must not be too hasty. In the mean time I must get back to my downy nest and soothe my ruffled ward."

At noon, dusty and tired he tramped up the drive leading to Larchmere Manor, the home of the Faulkners. Even the leaded windows glared at him reprovingly from the ivy-covered walls, but the sensation lacked novelty, and he went sedately into the house. Gravely he explained to the elder Miss Faulkner that the lecture had been tedious and the ensuing debate heated. He had missed his last train——

After a hot bath and a shave he went in search of his pupil and found him without difficulty in the library, a bright room all ivory and saxe-blue except for the low-running shelves where the bound volumes alined their orderly red backs.

From the doorway he surveyed Arthur Faulkner with suddenly sobered and thoughtful eyes. He seemed puzzled at the sight of the young man and doubtingly shook his head.

"Home at last!" sighed Faulkner. "I have missed your company. I have just stumbled across a priceless gem of Al-Muhallabi's. It begins, 'Where is death sold, that I may buy it?' You must hear it. I have translated several passages."

He was a queer boy, reflected Sheuster. Good-looking, with straight, clean-cut features and eyes rather too large for his face. His hair was black, long and smoothed back off his white forehead. It was sleek and glossy except for a few unruly strands which refused to lie back and stood up stiff and defiant. What a creature of contrasts! Superficially, he was just what his environment had made him, but there were those rebellious hairs, and the brown velveteen jacket could not disguise the square set of the shoulders. His hands were soft and too well kept but they were strong and capable and his legs incased in faultlessly creased, dandiacal corduroy trousers—to emphasize his socialist sympathies—were long and lithe.

Usually he was quite erudite and very abstract, but in moments of dissatisfaction he would quote Kipling—the imperialist. He could recite the "Ballad of East and West" in a voice that sent the tepid blood bounding and pounding through Sheuster's veins. And in his room, marring the soft color harmony, there hung an etching by some little-known artist of two fighters swaying locked together while a panting referee tried to drag them apart. It was living, crude and strong, and the Misses Faulkner bowed their heads when they entered the room that it might not shock their tender souls.

"Now you must tell me about the lecture," Faulkner suddenly broke in on his tutor's reverie.

"Oh, yes—" answered Sheuster with a start. "Dull, my dear boy. Victorian novelists. Old Mercer did not know how to handle his subject. Imagine calling Dickens a constructive critic of his times. Mercer suggested——"

He rambled on complacently, imagining situations and *bon mots,* but all the while he found his mind running away from him, going back to the astonishing proposal made by Cadger Watson.

THE mud-splashed limousine drew up before the Crown Hotel at Reading. Before the heavy machine had come to a standstill Arthur Faulkner opened the door and leaped out. His face was flushed, his eyes were dark and he muttered imprecations beneath his breath. It was quite obvious to the meanest intelligence that he was in a temper; a furious, unmannerly temper. He dashed through the falling sleet to the shelter of the doorway and stood there impatiently awaiting his tutor who followed at a more leisurely pace.

"Really," snapped Faulkner. "Of all the absurd things to do! Honestly, Mr. Sheuster, you should have allowed William to drive the car. Why, we had a hundred narrow escapes. My nerves are all to pieces. And we shall be late for the recital."

He stamped his foot angrily.

"I am beginning to think——"

"Wonderful! Thought is the most priceless heritage of mankind," murmured Sheuster. "My dear Arthur, your annoyance is excusable, but I had to test my newly acquired technique. William rudely scoffed at my ability to handle the limousine."

"So you decided to risk my life in this idiotic way! I shall never forgive you if we are late reaching Oxford."

"When we have lunched—" there was a suspicion of a chuckle in Sheuster's voice—"I shall be able to drive you with a skill our William would envy. Oxford is but a mere skid or so away. We shall be there long before three, I assure you."

Faulkner turned his back on the speaker and marched into the dining-room. He was beginning to loathe the sight of his tutor. Since his aunts had gone to the Riviera, Sheuster's bearing had undergone a marked change. The last two weeks in particular had been one long succession of mental jars and jolts. This once benign tutor had bullied William to be taught how to drive the car and, further proof of the change, he had actually been exercising every morning with a pair of dumbells! He said he was afraid of advancing years—Sheuster, who had been ageless since Faulkner had first known him! If the man was going to develop such mannerisms he would have to leave. After all, he was only kept on sufferance.

Satisfied with this resolution Faulkner seated himself at a table near the open fire and, ignoring his companion, gave himself up to the difficult study of a provincial English menu.

The whole room with its clinging smell of roast mutton and mint sauce irritated him. In a flash he decided that England was going to the dogs, that its restaurants were odious and that he would dismiss Sheuster as soon as he returned to Larchmere Manor. To forget all these detestable and upsetting affairs he concentrated his thoughts on the coming recital.

He was disturbed, however, by the sight of a person in a green ulster standing by the table vigorously shaking hands with Sheuster. A strange-looking person, corpulent, blue chinned, with a pug nose and large hands the color of raw meat.

Must he be introduced to this coarse stranger? The Fates were being harsh. He longed for the warm solitude of his library while at the same time he found himself possessed by a desire to plant his fist in the middle of the flushed countenance.

"Mr. Faulkner! I've heard of you. Our friend here has mentioned your name," the coarse-looking person was saying. "The world's a small place. Think of meeting you in Reading!"

"Do join us, my dear Watson," broke in the urbane Sheuster. "A cup of coffee, perhaps?"

"Wiv a cognac," hastily added Watson. "Well now, and where are you taking our young friend?" He spoke as though Faulkner were a sick child.

"Oxford—a concert," answered Sheuster. "We were delayed by the state of the roads. But I have had an opportunity to study my reactions to various kinds of danger stimuli. They are, I believe of a protopathic nature. I have spent an—ah—engrossing morning."

"Oxford!" bubbled Watson. "Well now, and me going there too. I *said* the world was a small place."

In a dream Faulkner found himself being forced to invite the repellent individual to join them. He was hypnotized by Sheuster's purring voice and he mumbled and blushed when spoken to. At heart he cursed himself for his weakness and reviled his aunts because they had never allowed him to learn how to drive. If only he could have left the room and sped away alone—anywhere to hide his impotent rage!

The meal was vile. He couldn't eat the cold mutton nor the watery vegetables. He remembered that his digestion was poor. The Watson person was drinking cognac and smacking his lips in a most disgusting way after each long sip. It was revolting!

He was thankful when at long last they were again in the limousine and crawling along the open road to Wallingford. Wrapped in fur rugs he effaced himself in a corner, feeling helpless and miserable. He tried to forget Watson sitting by his side and glared out of the window at the desolate country.

But what was that idiot Sheuster doing? Had he mistaken the way? Why had he turned to the left towards Wootton? The car, too, was going at a greater speed and Sheuster seemed to have it under perfect control. Unable to restrain his impatience he called out sharply:

"This isn't the right road, Mr. Sheuster. Don't you know the way by this time?"

"Don't you hear me?" he demanded after a pause. "Stop driving like a madman!"

For answer Sheuster put his foot more firmly on the accelerator and they rushed forward through Lyneham, splashing mud to right and left.

He tried to rise, but Watson's hand shot out and caught him by the arm.

"Keep still, young 'un," he growled, "or I'll knock your pretty face in."

His voice was commanding, and Faulkner sank back dazedly.

"What's the meaning of this piece of nonsense?" he quavered, addressing Sheuster's immovable back. "I demand——"

"If you don't shut up," Watson was excited and a trifle nervous, "I'll stamp on you—you angel face."

Stamp on him! As the car swayed around a bend Faulkner struck at the blue chin before him, but the blow had no more effect than a playful tap and a second later he was gasping for breath on the floor of the car while Watson, kneeling on his back, tied a muffler around his wrists.

"You stay down there," he said when he had finished the trussing to his satisfaction. "Don't move or I'll finish you. You can't try that kind of trick on me. Not much. You're a precious angel, you are. Worth a lot o' money to some people, ain't you? We're going to get some of it. You ain't fit to have it. Now just keep still or I'll twist your head off."

Hours passed. Watson sat stolidly, resting his muddy boots on Faulkner's back, and whistled drearily.

Once they paused just before nightfall to refill the gasoline tank and a gust of rain blowing in through the open door drenched Faulkner to the skin. He felt bruised and sick. Moreover, he was afraid and confessed the fear to himself. It couldn't be a joke. Sheuster never joked. He must have gone mad!

Faulkner lost all sense of time as the car bumped and jolted through the black night. He felt stiff and cold and his head, rubbing against the door-hinge, began to bleed.

Then, oddly enough, he fell asleep. He dreamed that he was in the center of a great hall full of shadows and white staring faces. He was naked but for a pair of short trunks and on his hands were two padded gloves. Boxing gloves! He was in the ring portrayed in that etching hanging in his bedroom! He felt as though a million pairs of eyes were watching him. It was indecent and absurd. He, Arthur Faulkner, in the rôle of a brutal prize fighter.

He decided to get away as quickly as possible. But a fat man with a blue chin was circling about him, keeping him in the center of the ring. The fat man hit him on the top of the head. It hurt and as they clinched he felt a sudden wave of anger sweep him. The sensation was pleasurable. Sheuster, in his shirt sleeves, very solemn and sedate, ordered them apart. Then he found himself dashing madly at his opponent, hitting, hitting, hitting. Each blow seemed to crash home on the fat body, sinking down to flesh and bone. The man tottered drunkenly, rocked back on his heels—there came a deafening roar from the close-packed throng—and pitched to the ground. The body collided with Faulkner's legs. He tried to get out of the way, but his feet turned to lead and he fell headlong—through space.

He awoke to find himself being dragged from the bottom of the car.

"Come on there, 'Angel Face,' " ordered Watson. "Speed up a little or you'll get your pretty ankles all wet in the snow."

Faulkner was led into a low, stone-floored room, lighted by an oil lamp which smoked and flickered dismally. In bitter anger he turned upon Sheuster who was bolting the door.

"You beast," he cried. "You hypocrite. You can't frighten me with this foolery. The police won't be long tracing us. If you imagine you can intimidate me——"

But he was intimidated and all but broke down when Sheuster answered gaily:

"My dear Arthur, do regain that ease of manner which marks your good breeding. Have I toiled in vain all these years?"

"Yeh," supplemented Watson. "Angel Face, you gotta be good. Don't weep. All we want is your money. Our friend the comic parson has written to your aunts, so don't worry. When they send the cash to an address o' mine we'll release you. If they don't pay we'll carve you up. It's easy."

Faulkner's mouth went quite dry and the words would not come to his lips.

"They are sure to find you," he finally managed to say.

"And I taught you geography with such tender care!" sighed Sheuster. "There is South America where one might become a cattle baron, or Rhodesia, a promising land. Or I might go to some island in the tropics and live a life of ease and plenty."

Watson chuckled.

"The world's all right—but if it weren't for your money, blimey, you'd be better off dead."

Faulkner subsided on to a wooden stool. He was too exhausted to think.

"Your preparations have been inadequate," he heard Sheuster saying. "No coal, no wood, no fire! I *am* surprized."

"Coal!" snorted Watson. "Coal! I'm not going to waste good fuel on the likes of him."

"But you seem to forget that I am living here too, as a temporary measure. This place is too cold for me to enjoy this adventure."

"There's wood in the yard. Chop as much of it as you like." Watson seemed out of temper. "Now let's lock that brat in the top room and get some sleep."

"WHY be so unkind?" drawled Sheuster, the sardonic glitter behind his eyes growing more pronounced. "You haven't spoken to me for a week. I feel hurt, especially when I see what an interest you have taken in Cadger Watson."

Faulkner paused a moment to wipe the sweat from his forehead and scowled at the speaker, then he picked up the ax which lay at his feet and went on chopping wood as though his very life depended upon his labors.

Sheuster, sitting on a pile of lumber, a shot-gun on his knees, surveyed his prisoner with an air of deep commiseration.

"And to think," he went on, "that your dear aunts have left you in suspense for over a month! Not a word, not a sign has come from them. Such callousness!

"Cadger Watson is beginning to fret. He is wasting valuable time which he might otherwise be devoting to more profitable pursuits."

He lapsed into silence and followed Faulkner's rhythmical swinging blows with a critical eye. The boy was undoubtedly thriving. There was color in his cheeks, muscle and sinew were beginning to stand out on his arms and shoulders, his whole bearing proclaimed his physical well-being.

Every day under Sheuster's supervision he had been made to work, chopping or sawing wood, drawing water from the well, washing and cleaning. No task had been too mean for him and after his first futile gust of temper he had obeyed orders without a word. He never complained of the ill-cooked food, the cold, damp room, and no longer quailed when Watson flew into one of his snarling tempers.

"I think you have done enough for this morning," Sheuster said at last. "Put the ax down gently and don't throw it at me, and as I hear my fellow-accomplice banging at the door we might as well go into the house."

Watson came in sullen and growling.

"No mail," he grumbled. "Not a word. I'm sick of this. If those women don't answer by tomorrow I'm going to get busy."

He turned suspiciously to Sheuster.

"Are you sure you told 'em exactly what would happen?" he asked.

"Quite sure," beamed Sheuster. "I went to great lengths to tell the ladies that Arthur was in great danger. Apparently they refuse to believe me."

Watson shook his head doubtingly.

"It looks fishy to me. You mailed those letters yourself, remember? Are you up to any funny tricks? If you are—" he scowled—"I'll do for both of you, so help me if I don't."

"How tiresome!" sighed Sheuster. "Do be calm, my dear Cadger. You saw the contents of those letters. I pride myself that my curt sentences would have cast horror into any soul."

Faulkner suddenly broke his long silence—

"If that's true, Sheuster, if you have terrified my aunts, I'll get even with you."

"You, shut up."

Watson shook his fist in the boy's face.

"Don't you try to butt in. I'm sick of the sight of you. If they don't come across soon I'll keep my promise."

"Now," he said, turning to Sheuster, "you write another letter and I'll mail it. Do it now."

"But why?" queried Sheuster, looking worried and alarmed. "Why? I have written three times. One letter is sure to reach them even if the Continental mail service is poor."

"Do as I say, d'you hear? I'm not going to be made a fool of by those two old women. And you're not so very interesting either. Blimey!

"No! Tell you what I'll do. Angel Face can write to 'em. That'll make 'em come clean. Come on, boy, write as I tell you."

"I won't," snapped Faulkner and his voice rang true.

"You—won't!" Watson paused in gaping astonishment. "Well, I'm ——"

He walked up to Faulkner and gripped him by the shoulder.

"You'll do what you're told."

But Faulkner wrenched himself clear and before Watson could recover from his surprize a blow caught him full in the face, another smashed on his cheek as he tried to duck and another, a most business-like uppercut, nearly lifted him off his feet.

"Fight!" he heard Faulkner's exultant voice yell at him. "Fight, you big bully. You think you are tough—" a wicked right landed on his ribs—"show it then."

Watson, now badly frightened, backed away from the tearing devil before him. Once or twice he tried to retaliate, to stop the hail of blows, but he was too weakened to withstand the savage onslaught.

"Sheuster!" he called out. "Help! Sheuster!"

But Sheuster had tiptoed out of the room.

"Coward!" screamed Watson, trying to reach the shot-gun lying by the door.

Faulkner, a wild, primitive Faulkner, a living battering-ram, flung himself forward at the crouching man and one last blow caught Watson's jaw with hammer-like force. He went down and out, his head striking the stone floor with a sharp crack.

For a fraction of a second Faulkner looked at his victim and he grinned through cut and bruised lips; his dream had come true. Then he turned and fled out of the house, across the yard to the door. The key was in the lock, the door swung open and he bolted straight before him across the moors. There was mud underfoot and a thin drizzle of rain fell from the gray skies, but he laughed to himself as he ran.

Across the hills, somewhere, there must be a village and a village constable who would be only too pleased to vary the monotony of his daily routine.

And Sheuster—the coward who had sneaked away when he saw Watson beaten! Sheuster, the hypocrite! Thank God that was over! He could stand alone now without another man's help.

He toiled up a rocky hillside and paused to take his bearings. The barren rock-capped hills of Devonshire encircled him and the blurred light of late afternoon added to his uncertainty. He decided to push on towards a long ridge half-seen through the thickening mist.

But he found himself confronted by a hundred unexpected obstacles. He had to tear his way through gorse bushes, to clamber up steep slopes and to feel his way down into water-logged coombes where the sodden earth pulled and sucked at his feet. He began to tire and stumbled on mechanically until suddenly, while hurrying down yet another incline his ankle twisted on a loose stone and he went slithering, sprawling down the slope. More gorse bushes checked his fall just short of a muddy stream.

He extricated himself from the thorny embrace, crawling on hands and knees, and his language would have astonished his aunts. But when he tried to stand up and discovered to his pain and disgust that his right ankle was wrenched and useless he cursed with a fluency that would have won even Cadger Watson's unstinted approval.

Proof, however, of the change that had come over him he felt no fear, no dread of being alone, wet and cold, lost on the moors. His one desire was to reach a policeman and set up a hue and cry for his late captors.

He found that he despised Sheuster more than Watson, for Sheuster had deliberately planned to torture and rob two mild old ladies after having been treated for years as a member of their family.

Slowly, on all fours, Faulkner tried to crawl down the hill, hoping to find some shelter or hiding place for the night.

"You fled like a new-roused fawn," Sheuster's voice suddenly reached him close at hand. "I followed in your tracks as fast as I could. You appear to have injured yourself. Won't you rest for a few minutes?"

He came forward a gaunt figure in a ridiculous brown sweater and creased black trousers. Faulkner felt his heart pounding against his ribs. The Lord had delivered Sheuster into his hands. The fool was actually going to come closer.

"Thank goodness I have found you," Sheuster went on as he drew nearer. "You went so fast, I feared you might stray too far."

He looked at Faulkner with twinkling eyes, then he gave a sudden squawk of dismay as Faulkner caught him by the legs and, rolling over and over, they slipped down towards the stream. They battled furiously, silently, until at last, jolting and slithering they lay struggling at the water's edge. They tore and twisted and wrenched, body to body, until at last Sheuster began to give way and Faulkner holding him at arm's length drew back his left fist to administer one clean finishing blow. But his opponent sagged and collapsed, falling sidewise into the shallow stream before the blow landed. Faulkner's hand, however, grasped Sheuster's sweater and he managed to drag him ashore.

He felt exhausted and faint but immensely pleased with himself and the world. Dim memories of his boyhood came flashing back to him, and he smiled contentedly as he looked at Sheuster's dripping unconscious body.

It was nearly dark when Sheuster opened his eyes and murmured:

"My feet feel like ice. I should like——"

Then he caught sight of Faulkner and a smile spread over his battered countenance.

"Congratulations, Arthur," he said. "You nearly pounded the life out of me."

"Congratulations!" sneered Faulkner. "You'll be able to congratulate yourself when you're behind prison bars. You haven't had half the punishment you deserve."

"Perhaps not," agreed Sheuster, rubbing his bruised chin between two muddy fingers. "Perhaps not, but your—ah—victory delights me."

"What do you mean?" angrily asked Faulkner. "First you congratulate me, now you're delighted. I suppose you want to plead insanity."

Sheuster propped himself up on an elbow.

"Just keep quiet for a minute. I'll be perfectly explicit."

His teeth chattered as the night wind blew across his soaking shoulders.

"When I came to Larchmere Manor a good many years ago your aunts begged me to reform you, to change your brutal ways, in fact, they insisted that I try to make you a mollicoddle, a beautiful *Lord Fauntleroy*."

He paused and flapped his arms across his chest to restore a little warmth to his body.

"Go on," ordered Faulkner, "let's have the rest of this rubbish."

"Well, I call the world to witness that I succeeded in carrying out my instructions. I did so because I was younger than I am now, because I was delightfully lazy, because I liked the life at Larchmere Manor and it was easy to conform to your aunt's plans. Also I wanted to experiment, to see if I could really make of you a weak-kneed thing of moods and manners. You weren't promising material—" he chuckled—"but I moulded you.

"Then I became disgusted with myself and when Cadger Watson, who by the way, I had known in my University days as a race course tout, met me in London and called me a long faced fraud, I became more disgusted than ever.

"Later Cadger Watson proposed this Calabrian kidnaping. You know the rest. I agreed because I thought the shock, the fear and some hard work might undo some of my very rotten handicraft. You see, I succeeded. You revolted as I hoped you would——"

"Lies," retorted Faulkner. "Another string of lies. What about those letters you wrote to my aunts?"

"But they were never mailed. The messages I actually sent told of the pleasant journey we were having. In fact, here's a telegram I received yesterday when I went down to the post office."

He fished a crumpled sheet from his pocket and handed it to Faulkner who could barely see the words in the dim light. It read:

> So glad Arthur is well. See he is kept well covered. Tell him to write if not too fatigued.

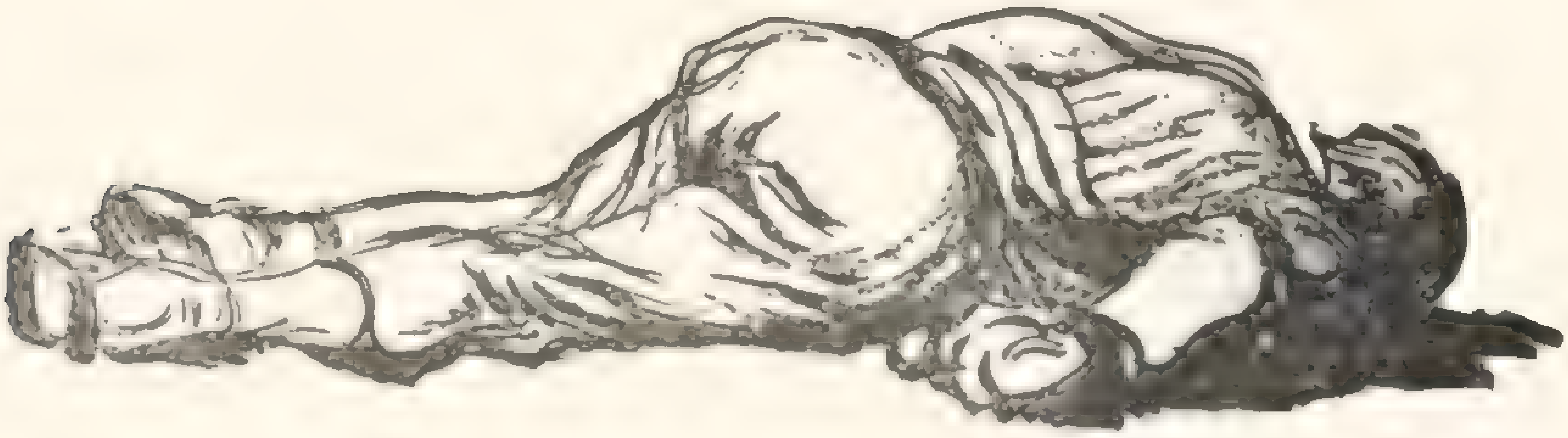
He looked at it for several minutes and then at Sheuster, but he found it more and more difficult to speak.

"It's beastly cold," Sheuster said at last. "May I carry you on my back as far as Teddington? It's quite close at hand. I left the car there a few days ago. You can hand me over if you like."

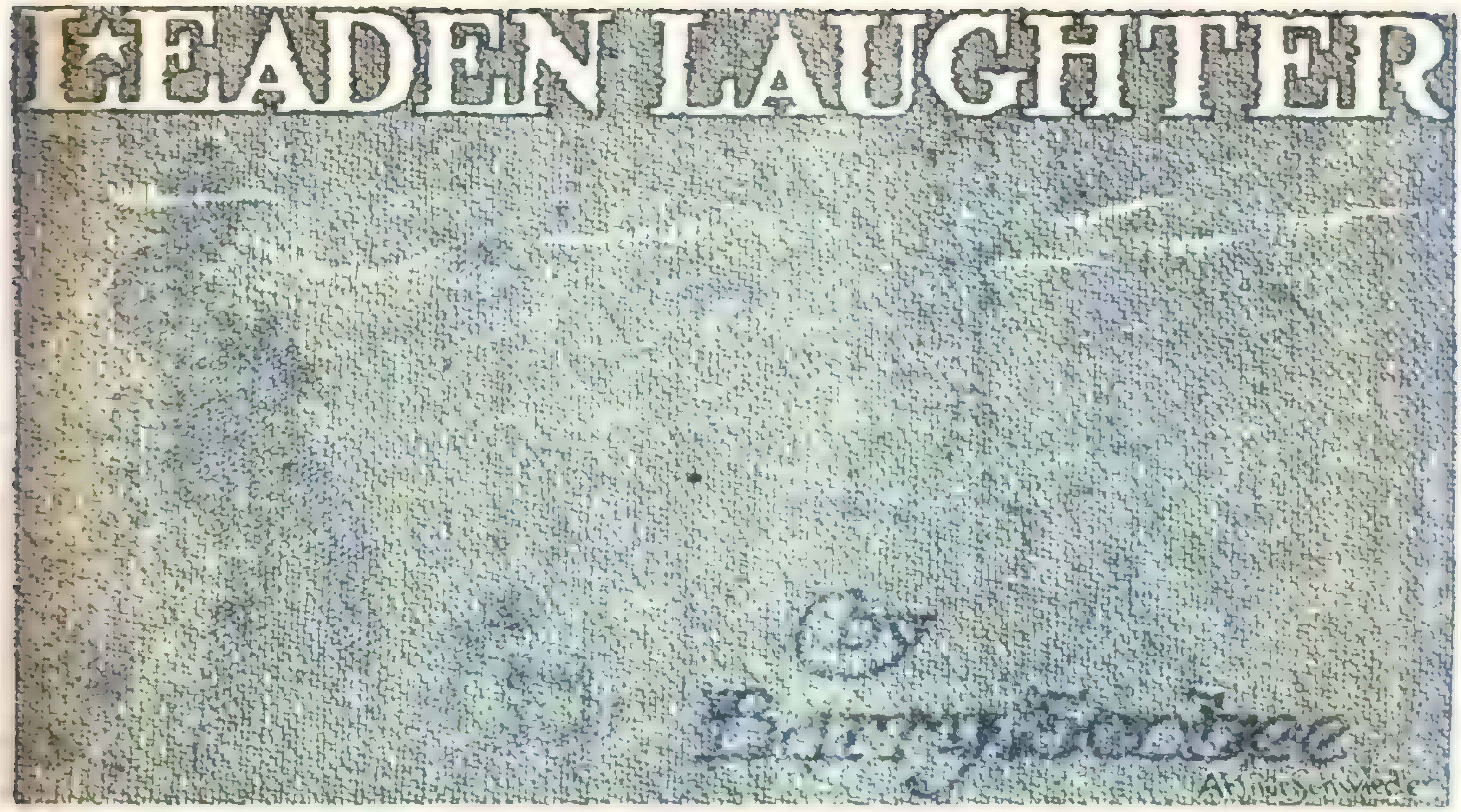
Faulkner laughed in the darkness.

"Hoist away, if you're strong enough. I'm beginning to like you."

"Really!" murmured Sheuster, bending down to help him to his feet. "How *very* interesting!"



*LEADEN LAUGHTER



Author of "The Rim," "White-Man Stuff," etc.

THE darkness of coming night had blotted out smaller objects. Bud Milroy, having left his horse back in the chaparral, squatted behind a ragged mesquite bush and surveyed the peaked-roof, unpainted ranch-house. Men's voices were audible here and there.

Bud stole forward, rifle in left hand, revolver ready in the right. He gained the edge of the open yard when a curious thing occurred.

The kerosene lamp in the kitchen was moved. The bar of light through the window moved likewise, and when the lamp was set down again this bar rested upon the man that Bud had hunted five days—the mixed-breed Mexican-Chinese border-raider, nicknamed by the Americans "Nutmeg."

The man sat alone on a wheelbarrow, his dark pockmarked face, that gave him the homely name, sinister and brooding. Evidently he had been reposing in the darkness. Alert, he moved at once from the dangerous revealing light, and his shadowy figure appeared to stand irresolute, as if he did not know where to turn for the moment.

Bud was tempted to call to him and fire quickly. But he hesitated. He had shot at this man no fewer than thirty times in the five days. Before that, through two years, he and other rangers had shot at Nutmeg a hundred times perhaps, and the Mexican, as he was commonly referred to, had never been nicked.

It had become legendary that the man bore a charmed life. He hated Chinese, denied that part of his blood, and was always at war with their low criminal element, yet no yellow knife or bullet had ever pinked him. The tale was on many a lip that a negress in Torreon, reading his palm, had read that his career would never be ended by a gringo bullet. Bud, shooting both long range and close up and missing, had become entangled in the bonds of this yarn.

For the moment the ranger was afraid. Not two hours gone he had emptied his revolver at the Mexican dashing by on a horse so close that he had seen a bullet trim the brim of the fellow's sombrero, yet the raider was not touched. True, Bud had not been touched by the raider's bullets. Yet now, for the first time in his manhood, he was afraid of another man—or of some unexplainable thing.

But Bud refused to give in to the fear. Where many a man would have made an alibi and hidden behind it, Milroy stepped out and called in a low voice—

"Greaser!"

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* *This is an Off-the-Trail Story. See first contents page.*

Bud beheld the Mexican shrink to the ground, quick and lithe as a jungle-beast, and fired twice before the half-breed opened. He shot four times more, standing upright, firing with all the care he could muster, while six bullets flung their demon's laughter close to his ears.

Bud was not hit. His instinct told him that he had missed his enemy. He possessed the faculty of shooting at a mark, say, and knowing as he pulled the trigger whether it was a hit or miss, eight times out of ten. To miss now at such close range—no more than forty feet—alarmed him deeply, got on the inside of him. He began to draw back toward the brush, rifle ready for any moving blot that might be Nutmeg.

Then, as he was seized from behind by arms that wrapped around him, the owner of the arms burst out in a madman's shouting. Bud tried to twist the rifle back to shoot him. The assailant got hold of the barrel. Other Mexicans rushed up with hand guns that poked at Bud in rough hands. His rifle was twisted away, his pearl-handled revolver removed from the scabbard. At orders from one he recognized to be Nutmeg he was rushed into the house.

The living-room was big and bare. A hanging oil lamp illumined it. A fire crackled in a great gaping cement fireplace. Bud leaned his gaunt, lithe form against the mantel and looked the crowd over. Nutmeg swaggered before him.

"So," the raider crowed. "One more time the greates' ranger of the Texas Big Bend country is safe in the possession of his frien', me! Ha-ha-ha!"

Bud hated the man. Never before had he actually hated a man that he hunted. But his hate for this slick, taunting half-breed was so virulent that his arm muscles felt numb and incapable of action. He felt that if he could move he would leap on the diabolical imp and choke him.

"Why waste your lead?" Nutmeg mocked, now in Mexican. "Give it to the old women to kill goats with, or shoot at mountains, so you hit something, eh?"

Duly, the crowd laughed.

"You didn't hit me either," Bud retorted childishly.

Awful rage flared in the leader's face at this reminder of his own failure. He gripped his revolver, raised it full in Bud's face.

"You—you—!" he spluttered. "I kill you this time! You do not escape. Red pig of the North!"

He pulled the trigger—on an empty cylinder. In his fury at this he flung the gun against the wall and shook his fists crazily.

Nutmeg's face took on a Chinese look—slanted eyebrows and a peculiarly puckered mouth. The story was that this occurred in his great wraths, and hating the Chinese he hated this. He seemed to realize that this wrath was betraying him, for he checked himself, and his cunning, patient Chinese nature calmed him, and the Mexican strain took the place of the Cantonese look. He turned to the men quietly.

"Is supper ready?" he asked.

A man wearing a burlap sack for an apron said it was and led them into the kitchen. Bud was well covered with guns. Some of the men seemed amateurishly eager to show automatic pistols. These, he figured, were some of the ranch-hands armed somehow by the raider. Nutmeg turned mocking at once.

"We shall honor you, *señor*," he said loftily. "You shall sit at the end of the table and bless us like a general, eh, with your presence?"

Bud felt a pang of relief at this. He had not eaten all day and he was half-starved. He slid into the designated chair at the head of the long table.

Nutmeg proceeded to load his own revolver, while the men around the table, twelve in number, laughed and joked and stacked their various guns in tripods, as soldiers stack rifles, in a row down the middle of the board. The leader sat around the corner of the table on Bud's left. When his gun was stuffed with cartridges he carefully laid it down at the left of his tin plate well out of Bud's reach. Bud had hoped it would be nearer. No telling what might turn up. He tried a little trick. He sneered.

"Huh, I didn't know you were left-handed."

"Oh-ho," jeered the raider, "so the ranger would attempt escape, eh? I shall make it easy!"

Nutmeg moved his handsome silver mounted six-gun to his right hand, within easy reach of Bud's left. The taunt won.

The food began to go around. Nutmeg politely filled Bud's tin plate with savory brown boiled beans properly thickened, barbecued goat, and a steaming hunk of cornbread. Bud stooped to it like a hungry dog, only to have the Mexican shove his head back with a shortarm jab.

"Pig!" he bellowed. "That is mine!" He snatched away the plate. "Would you eat with men? You brought an empty belly. You can watch us with a watering mouth."

WHEN the edge of their appetite was worn off the men set in to talk about the shooting and the capture of the Texas ranger. To have this well-known ranger in their possession was a huge joke. Also it meant revenge for the damage he had done them more than once. When the time seemed propitious Nutmeg set in to haze by touching the subject at a delicate point.

"But he does not shoot straight, this Bud," he observed with a lazy grin.

The men openly admired Pedro, at the other end of the table opposite Milroy, for his quick work in giving the ranger the bear hug, as they called it, when the capture was made. And Pedro grinned sheepishly and sweated under their admiration, and made Bud wonder keenly why, for it was not altogether modest embarrassment. In his great confusion the man drew out a plug of tobacco to take a chew in the middle of the meal. They roared at this.

"But Pedro is a smart fellow," commented Nutmeg. "He will do fine raiding with us. He has worked on the railroad in Kansas, and he tells me that if it were not for the Texas rangers Mexico could lick the United States easy."

This was mixed satire and praise for Pedro.

Again Pedro twisted. The talk went on, except that Nutmeg was thoughtful for a while. When he spoke again it was in a still higher humor. Said he, speaking Mexican, which he knew Bud understood well:

"Pedro was telling me yesterday when I stopped here to leave some extra guns with my friend the foreman, who crossed the river tonight on a mission, that in Kansas they have curious habits, the *rurales*. He says people will cross the village street after dark so as not to meet those brave Mexicans who work on the sections—such men as Pedro. I had not thought Americans so fearful.

"And he tells me that *rurales* in their fields set up 'scarecrows' to frighten away the ravens from the corn. Flapping scarecrows!

"It makes me think of something, *señor*. I am glad he spoke. I shall crucify you tomorrow to the flagstaff in Del Carmen. And you shall dry up and blow to frighten other rangers from crossing the Rio Grande into Mexico."

"Haw—haw—haw!" roared Bud, and the laughter was by no means forced, for the picture struck him as funny. "You try that, Mex, and about sixteen rangers will nail you up-side-down along-side o' me."

They all howled at this, and then showed their mirth was not any too genuine by dropping into silence as they went on with the eating. Bud was soon occupied with his own thoughts.

In his ridings back and forth to carry out the law, Milroy had been at this so-called Boston ranch a half-dozen times and knew the buildings well. They were two miles from the Rio Grande. The nearest habitation was old Gonzales' store, six miles up the valley. The ranch, a run-down place, was owned by Boston men but was run by Mexicans from foreman to hands, who had but meager means to conduct it with. Friendships here evidently accounted for Nutmeg's at-homeness.

Bud knew the inside of the house too and began to go over it in his mind. It was two stories with a loft. The two rooms of the loft were littered with old gear of the ranch and house left there when a man named McTavish had been in charge years before. The second floor had three bedrooms. But Bud saw no hope in all this. He turned his attention to the men. Only three were recognizable as Nutmeg's wild confederates. The others were just—hands.

Except Pedro. There was something curious about Pedro. He might be a friend, but—what chance to show it?'

The eating of the twelve men was almost more than Milroy's stomach could stand, so keen was the hunger of him. He thought of snatching food, but that would only bring mistreatment. He began to fancy a little play——

Grab Nutmeg's fine revolver—and he was alert enough to do it at any instant—spring away from the table, hold up the gang, shoot Nutmeg in his tracks if he didn't get hands up! Simple.

Or, suppose he could not grab the gun,

but could spring away. Get into the front room, seize his own revolver and rifle from the mantel, and dodge into the hall and into the night. Later he could return and get food, and shoot this half-breed if he were still about. Food! He would always smell barbecued goat.

Nutmeg strangled suddenly. He must have inhaled a crum. He coughed violently. And Bud reached for the fine gun.

Milroy sprang back from the table with the revolver in his left hand. The raider slanted an agonized look at him. The men tautened in their places, in absurd attitudes.

Bud tried to fire over their heads to warn. His left forefinger tugged but the hammer did not respond. The men realized something was wrong. Their hands went toward their stacked arms. It all took place in a breath. Bud fled.

He sprang into the living-room. A bullet crashed somewhere. No time to jerk down his own guns. He darted through the other door and slammed it. In the hall he slammed back the front door. But he was not willing so easily to abandon his firearms, to give up the raider. He slammed the door again and darted up-stairs in long strides.

Bullets splintered the inside door. Men racketed into the hall. He soft-padded it up the second part of the stairway to the second floor. He listened for a few minutes. The search tore around the house outside, and men slammed doors back and forth below. He sneaked down part way, the stairs creaking. He got far enough to see that all lights had been extinguished when a voice in the hall spoke out—

"Who's there?"

Bud did not move. He sat breathless until steps moved from the hall to the living-room. Then he eased back up-stairs. The men gathered back into the house gradually, and when something was said about going to bed he made his way up the noisy narrow stairway to the sloping-ceiled junk-rooms.

The men turned in gradually. Bud sat at the head of the stairs on the third floor and waited for the house to get quieted down so that he could descend. But in the five days of hard riding he had not slept eight hours all told, and in no time he found himself falling over sidewise in sleepy stupor. He tried to pinch and shake himself awake—but in the end he was beaten and he crawled into the second room and closed the door, all but a crack.

"I'll get some sleep," he told himself thick-headedly, "if they tie me hand and foot."

He struck a match close to the floor, surveyed the littered room, saw a split shotgun, a trunk, old saddle ropes, a mattress and a piece of carpet on it where somebody had once slept—and could never recall afterward of getting to the mattress.

When Bud awakened sunshine was falling through the window and his watch told the hour of ten o'clock in the forenoon.

He rolled over and looked through the window cautiously. Three men were currying horses at a hitchrack by the corral gate, and the bandit chieftain stood with his back safely to the wall of an adobe storehouse. The temptation flared hot to shoot through the broken pane and assassinate the man.

Milroy took up the gun, and remembered that it was the bandit's and that it had failed to work. However, he saw now that the trigger guard was concave at the front rather than convex and that his left forefinger, unfamiliar with the touch, had been tugging in that concavity rather than against the trigger. The gun was ready to use.

And Bud remembered many things. There was the time nearly two years before when he had fallen into the hands of the Mexican. The fellow had tried treacherously to kill him, had robbed him of his boots, so that when he escaped from the trap he was barefoot in the rocks and cactus of the Big Bend. But this was not the worst. It was the taunting of the fellow, his luck at getting away, his cleverness at fooling the rangers, his very superiority as a criminal, that made Bud's hate climb to the boiling point.

And Bud did hate! How he did hate. His eyes blurred so that he was afraid to try to shoot. He might miss again and he would be in a net. He had the faculty of lifting his thought from a subject better left alone, and now he jerked his mind from revenge.

The raider's continued presence here on the American side puzzled Bud. There seemed no adequate reason for him to remain, with rangers and soldiers combing the Big Bend for him.

Bud removed his boots and tiptoed into the next room. Remote sounds from the kitchen told of somebody in the house, but there was no snore nor whisper from the second floor. He cautiously surveyed the country through the north window.

Two men were plowing an irrigable field under the pleasant February sun. No other human figures were to be seen—until he caught the outline of a horseman atop a hill a mile away to the northwest.

"A lookout," thought Milroy, "for me and other gringos."

Nutmeg had come into Texas to raid the silver mines at Chineti. As soon as his presence was known, rangers and soldiers set out on a hunt for him. Bud had got off alone the day before on a personal "hunch." He knew the Mexican felt hard pushed. The stay at the ranch the night before had been for food and probably with the hope of recapturing him. There was no ready explanation of their still staying. The lookout spoke of the uneasiness Nutmeg must feel.

"I'll bet," Bud told himself, "he's hanging around here to pull something spectacular. He's got a card up his sleeve somehow."

Bud longed for his own pal of a six-shooter, that he had packed for years, and for the rifle. With the thought of working down the stairways and getting them, and being armed for any eventuality, he moved to the narrow stairs. The first board whined, the next one screeched, making Bud draw back as if from the shock of icy water. Surely the racket could be heard by the men by the corral! It was no go in that silent house. He went back and lay down for more sleep.

On awakening the second time the silver open-face watch on its greasy cowhide thong showed four o'clock in the afternoon. Bud felt rested and his hunger pangs had waned. Nor was he particularly thirsty. For a half-hour he lay and stared at the ceiling and plotted, and the result was a plan for escape.

In pursuance of the plan he knotted the old saddle ropes and fragments together to make a sufficiently long and strong line to allow him to reach the ground by way of the window. When darkness thickened and sounds told that the gang was at supper again he tied the rope to the doorknobs and backed out through the window. His boots were tied together to prevent a hollow banging and slung over his back.

It was too dark for him to make out the ground below. He liked this, for it would allow him to get away unseen. Nutmeg would not have a guard set, not knowing he was there.

He descended cautiously, holding his body away from the side of the house with his sock feet touching lightly. Now and then he gripped the rope between his feet to hold better, and listened. Not a sound in the yard.

At last he touched the ground and straightened, and stood pending on the rope listening acutely. Then square in his ear a velvety, mocking voice spoke, and a gun was jammed against his ribs.

"*Señor!* A surprize, no? Ha-ha-ha!"

BUD did not move, which said much for his self control. His hands were above his head. Nutmeg chuckled and gurgled.

"Toni has wait for you since dark," he ran on. "He is to whisper through the window if you start down this route. He whispered! March into the house again, gringo!"

He poked Bud in the back with the gun, and lightly kept his left hand on Bud's two hands above his head. So this was the spectacular thing, thought Bud, that Nutmeg had waited for. How the Mexicans along the river would laugh at the story of that stealthy descent and that mock sympathy, "A surprize, no?" And the Americans, too, would give him the ha-ha. Murder was in his heart. He would shoot without warning now!

Inside, the Mexicans came crowding from the kitchen, wiping mouths on sleeves and grinning.

"You snore loudly, paleface," effused Nutmeg in his own tongue. "Pedro here has sharp ears. He hears you snoring 'La Cucarache' when his eyes come open this morning in bed, and he go up the stair on his hands and knees to see who it is. And Toni follows, and they see you, *caaaw-snnnn!* like that. Snoring is a loud habit, eh, *señor?*"

A generous laugh went around. Bud stood with his back to the wall grimly eying them, his arms judiciously folded. A half-dozen guns covered him more or less alertly. Nutmeg, holding his nose with an air of gingerliness, as if the necessity nauseated him, plucked his own fine gun out of Bud's scabbard with dainty thumb and forefinger and dropped it into the fireplace.

"I, Captain Leandro Ernesto Perez, citizen of Mexico," he declaimed, "shall I sleep with a gun polluted by a gringo?"

With a flourish he emptied the gun he had in his hand, which was Bud's pearl-handled revolver, and tossed it at the silver-mounted one in the ashes, to the "ahs" and "ohs" of the regretful gang. The handle was smashed and the thing buried in the ashes at least. It was a spectacular play to the grandstand, for the gun was famous—a fine story for women's ears along the Rio Grande. Then Nutmeg climaxed the episode by slapping Bud, first on one cheek, then the other. Bud went white with wrath.

"You offspring of mismarried degenerates!" he shouted.

He struck out swift as light, smashing the Mexican's nose and mouth with his one hundred seventy-five pounds of weight behind his hard fist. Nutmeg folded down into a shapeless pile.

Bud expected nothing but to be shot. The Mexican was on his feet instantly, his wiry body refusing to be knocked out.

"Calmness!" he shouted. "Do not shoot! This man is for a purpose—to crucify on the flagstaff at Del Carmen!"

To get the men away, Nutmeg rushed them back to finish their supper. He named Pedro to stay and guard Bud.

"And you," he ordered Milroy, "will stand with your back to the fireplace so that I can see you from my end of the table. If you move I shall shoot!"

Bud thought—

"He's doing it this way so I can't taunt him again into leaving his gun in reach."

"And you," Nutmeg said to Pedro, "will sit by the window there with your gun ready to fire. A mistake will go hard with you, *sabe?*"

Pedro grinned. He slouched over, took a chew of plug, and raised the window obviously to spit outside rather than on the floor. This appeared to satisfy Nutmeg, and he went to the interrupted meal.

The guard could not be seen from the table. He spat and winked at Bud. The ranger felt that something was in the air, and kept alert not to show his interest to the watchful Nutmeg. Pedro squeaked his chair around, and got up and began to pace, and frequently spat copiously and loudly. He and Nutmeg called back a joke or two between them. Obviously the bandit was fond of this man, who, to Bud, was plainly not one of the gang.

Then Pedro did a clever thing. Spitting, pacing, making himself noisy, he wrote on the wall with his finger, in huge slow words so that Bud could follow. When it was all complete he had written in common English:

Sorry bout grab you. Sorry bout snore. I live Fort Davis. Family. Your friend. No like these *hombres*. I make them think I am bad man till we escape. My horse hitched in front.

Bud had done his part by acting sultry and not keeping a too steady eye on Pedro. The man now removed his filled cartridge-belt, scabbard and automatic and laid them on the chair. He paused to write one more word—

Ready.

Then he turned and slid through the window, dropping away into the night. Bud followed, darting across the room, snatching up the belt, and springing through the window. As he dropped into the night a shot snarled over his head.

The night was thick. There was a squeak of saddle leather, sand-muffled hoofbeats, and Pedro was gone.

The gang poured out of doors and windows. Lights were extinguished. Bud fired at their pistol flashes, and the Mexicans fired at his pistol flashes, and the lead began to screech its evil chorus around him.

Bud laughed—the wild laugh of a man who hates and shoots to kill and takes joy in it. It was good to be free again, with a gun in hand and blasting away at one's enemy. He cackled his cold, hard mirth in rythm with the cadence of the lead.

And he was not hit. His life was charmed too! The "offspring of mismarried degenerates" had nothing on him! In all his life Bud had not so foamed with hate, had never been so reckless and determined. At last—the impression dominated Bud—this half-breed who had so long taunted him with escapes and mocking laughter was at the end of his tether.

Bud began to withdraw into the mesquite, which was not at all thick, to avoid the noose of crackling firearms that Nutmeg was trying to draw around him. But he did not cease to fire nor roar gibes in a kind of mad mirth. He was a man now unknown to his comrades—a man caught up in the arms of an awful passion of hate.

Time and again he slipped out of the noose, or stood fast while men passed so close he could hear their panting. Then they came with horses.

In the midst of this a *fearful* thought flashed through his mind—if he was being missed, likewise were his bullets missing. Was he—was he—was he not to kill this man?

He tried to shake off this fear, as he kept on in the night, but as the lead passed his ears or spurted in flame from his own gun it seemed to gibber exultingly of charmed lives.

Laughing lead! What an idea had got into his mind, he thought. Mocking lead!

AT DAYBREAK, when the eastern sky was making a bit more light in the low sandy valley of the Rio Grande de la Norte than the moon overhead, Bud Milroy, listless, weary, drooped to the door of Old Gonzales' store-home and hammered on the door. He was burned out like the luke-warm ashes of an abandoned fire. He licked his lips with a dry tongue, and beat on the door again.

"Open to a ranger!" he snarled. "What the —— is the matter!"

In the wake of the words the door opened, not abruptly but with an impression of gentleness, and a tall bewhiskered man stood there commandingly yet humbly, kindly as a father, gentle as a mother. When he saw that it was Bud his face lighted.

"My young friend! Good fortune in the morning, good fortune all the day! Come in, sir!"

Bud smiled wanly. Every one smiled in this man's presence if he possessed a spark of heart.

"I'm thirsty—starved," blurted out the ranger. "Nutmeg is close. Let me have something to eat, and rest a bit. Before it gets too light I shall get away."

"Lad, lad, do you never know peace? Nutmeg—I shall hurry, with regret to see you leave so soon."

He led Bud rearward and ended at the little kitchen of this long, narrow adobe.

"Nutmeg," he repeated. "He is near? The chaparral is full of Yankee soldiers."

He shaved at a board for kindling to build a fire in the high-legged cookstove. Bud made no apology for the early hour. An apology would not change the fact. He knew that Old Gonzales understood, however. And even now the merchant echoed the thought.

"No hour is early where there's friendship," he said softly. "Eh, lad? So Nutmeg—he visited me day before yesterday."

The old man chuckled. He was a friend of all, and so known. He was a man too of the wide world. Of Mexican nativity, he had once represented his government in a minor capacity at Washington, at Paris, had dwelt in Boston, a learned man; in Vancouver, was an interpreter for American troops in the Philippines. Instead of collecting mere knowledge of places he had found the best that was in men—their good thoughts. And he reflected the good; abounded with it.

Tactfully Gonzales had not lighted the kerosene lamp that set on the table, though the kitchen was dusky. Coming morning light, the moon, and the dancing bars of light from the crevice of the stove now illumined the kitchen. Milroy sat, and now he put out a hand to a big blue Army Colt's forty-five automatic on the table.

"I am surprized that you have this," he said.

Old Gonzales laughed in a pleased way.

"It's a compliment, son, for you to realize that I would not shoot a man!"

Bud removed his belt and gun and shoved the rigging aside wearily.

"I've used up all my ammunition," he said. "Your gun is bigger than the one I've had all night."

"Take it," offered Old Gonzales. "Here is the belt and all with plenty of cartridges. The captain of the soldiers—fine boys!—left it with me. He said honest men should be armed, and he ordered me to shoot Nutmeg if he came. He did not understand."

"He thought it was for your good."

An amused chuckle came from the beard. "And Nutmeg gave me more ammunition to shoot the soldiers with," he said.

Bud laughed a weary note. His host set him a cup of water and got fuel on the fire. Then somewhere he got a handful of dully shining steel-nosed cartridges.

"There they are, what he gave me, nine of them."

He laid them down before Bud, who picked them up and stuck them loose in his coat pocket. They were for a Colt's forty-five.

"You fought all night," observed Old Gonzales presently, harking back to some of Milroy's first talk. "I thought, after the clock struck two, that I heard several shots."

"It was a running fight, six or eight after me."

"Any—casualties?"

Bud shook his head.

"But I'll get him, I'll get him yet!" he burst out savagely, hitting the table with a fist. "The half-breed!"

Old Gonzales set water to boil and rice to cook. When this was done he opened the door for the cool morning air to drift into the now hot kitchen and sat down at the bare clean table opposite to Bud, and looked at him with the eyes of a good and Christly man.

"Son," said he, "you are a sure shot, famed in every cot along this ancient and yellow Rio Grande."

"I have bent ten silver dollars in ten shots at one hundred feet with my pearl-handled six-gun," Bud answered, not boasting.

"Why then have you not slain this man you call a renegade?"

Bud shifted uneasily.

"I know why, my boy. The hate in you. It has torn you asunder. It has stolen away your calmness. Ah, lad, lad, it is a dangerous thing, is hate.

"Hate means disaster for some one. Fill a town with hate and there are quarrels and—accidents, and sorrow. My friend, purge your thought. Kill if you must, if duty and the good of others and your office command, but kill in sorrow, not in hate.

"There is but one thing in the world, my boy, and that is love. 'But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.' The Book, lad."

"But I have seen good men shot down," countered Bud, not argumentatively, only to get the answer.

"But love did not do it. And he who was shot down did not pass from God, but went on with life. In hate, son, is danger. Mark my words! But in love is peace and strength."

The room was restful, warm to Bud in his sweat-soaked garments. Somehow peace did seem to pervade this little box of a room. He was no longer weary. He laid his head on his arms on the table to wait until breakfast—and slept.

"What have we here?"

Bud heard the words as from a long distance. He knew a third man was in the room. He jerked up, wide awake.

The day was at hand. Breakfast was set on the clean table. And Nutmeg was in the doorway, Bud's rifle in its saddle-boot slung over his back, and Bud's pearl-handled revolver in his right hand, covering the ranger.

Old Gonzales was sitting down, back from the table, as if he had been in the act of pulling up to the board when the raider stepped to the threshold.

"So," assured Nutmeg, "on the flagstaff at Del Carmen today noon you shall be crucified."

Holding the gun steadily on Milroy, the captain bandit strode around the table and dragged the heavy army pistol, that Gonzales had proffered to Bud, out of the latter's reach, and took up the smaller gun and belt that Bud had cast aside and, seeing that there was no ammunition, flung them into a corner.

"Sanctuary, eh?" he snarled at Old Gonzales.

"For every man. I was at the point of rousing my guest to breakfast with me. Will you lay aside your belligerency and join us?"

It was an amazing request. Nutmeg laughed incredulously. Milroy searched the old man with a look.

"A sanctuary—for foreigners," asserted Nutmeg.

"God knows no foreigners," smiled the gentle man. "I but try to reflect him."

"God, eh?" repeated the bandit. "How would you like to go to the presence of your God? Wouldn't like it, would you?"

Nutmeg thoughtfully drew the Colt's forty-five from its scabbard.

"I'm fond of a gun this size," said he to Bud, "but I am carrying your famous pearl-handled double-action. With you blowing on the flagstaff it will be a souvenir, eh? Else would I throw it aside for this good Army piece."

He did return the lighter gun to his belt and retain the heavy Colt's.

"Well?" he snarled at the old man. "What do you say?"

Old Gonzales' face shone, and he spoke softly:

"I am before the Father now, and no man or bullet can separate us. I am in His presence always except when the veil of the fleshly mind stands between."

"You have sheltered this man, my enemy," pronounced Nutmeg. "I have slain all sorts of men for less. A wink from evil, and I would tickle this trigger."

Old Gonzales shrugged characteristically, and smiled as tenderly as a man may in this world, and his lips formed the soundless words—

"No difference."

Nutmeg's impulse plainly was to fire, but he held himself. He stepped behind the old man. His eyes were red with hate.

"You!" he flung at Bud. "You can't escape! My men up and down the river are puckering the string now. But I—I was shrewd. I knew you would be here, sheltered by this old goat!"

The Mexican's hate flared. He raised the gun. Old Gonzales read Bud's expression of horror. The good man closed his eyes.

The shot roared through the room.

At the second shot from Nutmeg's gun Bud was leaping for the door. At the third he was on the sill, and was outside when the fourth bullet flung its leaden viciousness past his ears. Bud sped for the near-by cover of the surrounding mesquite.

Free again from the enemy's grip! The reaction was terrific to the shaken Milroy. He chuckled terribly in his throat, like a madman sure enough. Old Gonzales shot down. It enraged him. His revenge must be double now.

Nutmeg came after Bud in the chaparral. Bud hid, then threw a stone and got the Mexican to stalking the racket it had made. Then he himself stole back with the cunning of an animal to hunt a gun. A gun was the first necessity.

The Army pistol lay between the door and the edge of the brush, where Nutmeg had flung it when the magazine had run out. Bud leaped for it, to evade the Mexican should the fellow be near, back there in the brush. He dashed into the house and snatched up the belt with shining cartridges.

Old Gonzales lay forward across the table, the boards beneath him splintered by the bullets. The temporal flesh was there, but Bud understood swiftly that the spirit had removed itself a thought away—only a thought away.

Bud sprang for the mesquite again, and the Mexican, evidently having discovered the ruse and hurried back to prevent Bud arming himself, was just in time to fire one shot at the ranger before the friendly chaparral proved sanctuary again.

The duel of dawn between the two men went on. As they hunted each other and caught occasional glimpses they sent their snarling lead.

The old thought of laughter still persisted. It was curious, he felt, that it did.

The fear of the night before got hold of him again. Was he not to slay this man? Was a Yankee bullet in fact not to bring him down?

A bugle sounded assembly far away in the cool morning—Yankee soldiers up the river getting ready for the day's man-hunt. Milroy believed this would send the Mexican scurrying riverward, and he was right. Yet the fugitive was not in too big a hurry. He sneaked aside twice and got Bud almost abreast both times, but Bud cared little. The half-breed's bullets could not find him.

It was another running fight, with the ranger the hunter again. The men that had been puckering the string for Nutmeg through the night probably had made haste to the Mexican side by this time. Bud tried to close up with the raider, and he grew half frantic as the distance to the river shortened.

Bang—bang—bang! Kicked up dust, broken twigs—work of the bullets that whined and jeered and laughed. Laughed! What an idea had got into his mind, thought Milroy.

Then he discovered that his ammunition was gone.

What was it Old Gonzales had said—danger in hate? Funny he had not remembered in time to cool off and get calm. He sat down in the sand and hugged his knees, trying to remember all that the old man had said about hate and danger.

The last and mad splurge of hate had been partly in Old Gonzales' behalf. And it came to him that Old Gonzales would not have approved of it. Had he heeded the gentle man's words he would have dropped his hate, he saw clearly now, and would have not wasted his ammunition as he had wasted it for days—in sheer uncalm firing. Yes, in his hate danger had lurked. Hating, he had dissipated his means, had been made useless by hate.

Then he remembered the nine cartridges that Nutmeg had given to old Gonzales. They were in his coat pocket. Bud saw it was a sort of retribution that he was having a hand in.

In love is strength, he remembered. All at once he comprehended within his heart something of Old Gonzales' goodness and faith and love for his fellow men. A serenity took hold of him like the comforting hand of God. His passion of hate left him. For the first time in days he felt calm. His fear went away like a mist. He felt changed.

Then he arose and went on, calm, sure. He followed the Mexican's tracks in the sand. His only dread was that the man would get away before he got anywhere near in range.

Bud followed the trail to the river, and saw where the tracks entered the water. Nutmeg had crossed.

Milroy stood in the open space of the sandy beach, by the water that rushed along, wide and deep and noisy, a great river full of power, it seemed, and yellow. He stood there with the heavy pistol hanging down in his hand, disappointed, listless.

Laughter aroused him. Ha-ha-ha! The lead again. No, Nutmeg! Rousing, he saw the Mexican across the stream, saw him laughing and waving—could barely hear him above the racket of the water.

Nutmeg had the rifle in his hands. He could reach Bud easily with it, but he knew that he was fairly safe from a pistol, even an Army Colt's. He had Bud where he wanted him, and he began slowly to get the rifle up to shoot.

Bud, seeing and understanding all this fully, was not hurried. His hate was gone. He even wondered how he had been so shaken and foundationless. He felt calm, strong. His hate was gone!

The ranger stepped his right foot forward. He lifted his left hand negligently to his left hip and rested it there. He raised the gun. All these movements were unstudied—the free, lithe position of a calm, sure man.

Nutmeg likewise prepared to fire with the rifle. Once again his attitude showed that he was flinging out ribald laughter. Again Bud heard the tinkle of it across the waters. It was like the laughter of lead.

Then Bud tensed, and straightened out his arm, and began to shoot at the figure across the river. Nine times he pulled the trigger, for the cartridge in the barrel and the eight in the magazine. And nine bullets sped across in a space perhaps of two seconds.

Nutmeg fell.

Bud looked around. He was unmoved. Poor—no, rich Old Gonzales, rich because he knew what goodness meant. So calm. Calmness was a great thing.

A soldier rode out of the chaparral two hundred yards above. He stopped a moment and regarded Bud. Then he rode into the water and swam his horse across. He was swept down so that he landed near the body. He got off and examined it. Bud shouted to him to bring the rifle and the pearl-handled revolver. At first the man in khaki, not being able to hear, did not comprehend. However, Bud kept on, and made signs, and the soldier finally understood.

The cavalryman dragged the body into the flowing stream and let it be taken by the pulling water. He crossed back, and when he rode up along the sand, man and horse dripping, he called out—

"What the —— gun did you shoot him with, Mister?"

"An Army Colt's, forty-five caliber," Bud answered.

"Well, I'll say—here's your pearl-handled gun and the rifle. I'll say, Mister Ranger, it was some shooting. You stitched that *hombre*—stitched him nine times from the Adam's apple to the belt buckle.

THREE PRONGS

A Complete Novelette

by Georges Surdez

Author of "The Yellow Streak," "A Game in the Bush," etc.

TO THE north, the Soudan, to the south, Belgian Congo, to the west Kamerun and French Congo, and to the east the Niam Niam country and the Uganda.

On the banks of a sluggish stream that flowed between two high walls of dark green tropical vegetation, the encampment sprawled, a number of wretchedly built grass shelters cluttered, as if for protection, about a few Arab tents. On the north side of the clearing on the fringe of a dense forest, was the market place, crowded with men of many different races.

The lithe Arab elbowed the Messalit of the Wadai. There were the bulky, brutal faced Koukas and the slinking Foulbes. All were armed, with a collection of weapons as varied as the tribes; the trade muskets of the barbaric negroes, and the short Colt carbines brought thirty years previous from America; the finest rifles of modern make—Winchesters, Remingtons, Mausers. On the left were the slave lines where "Black Ivory" was bartered to the strange people from the southern bank of the stream, for the gold and tusks they brought in exchange.

Not a permanent city, this, merely a temporary trading place, here today, vanished tomorrow.

THE slave, squatted among his companions, watched the approach of the dealer, a skinny, filthy, rapacious brute, fonder of bestowing the lash than granting good food.

"Get up!" was the order.

He rose, and faced the group that had gathered about. There were six in number, all tall and well built. The foremost, whose hair showed white under his head-dress of feathers, was unmistakably the leader. At his elbow stood a wizened-faced old man, a medicine-man, judging from the numerous amulets and fetishes dangling from his belt and the rude scepter he carried. These two were unarmed. The others, all youths, bore short spears, shovel-headed, the hafts covered with buffalo hide clamped in place by hammered copper rings, the same material which formed the handles of the short, straight, broad sword dangling from leather aprons in ornate leather scabbard. Beneath the chocolate-colored skins, the muscles flowed and knotted with each move as the men silently formed about their chief. Their bearing was nobler and far more resolute than is usual with negroes.

"Behold—" the Arab dealer was speaking—"a sound man—cheap——"

"Naku, look him over—" the chief said in Arabic, with a foreign, guttural accent.

"Three Prongs," copyright, 1923, by Georges Surdez.

Naku, the medicine man, approached and laid his hand on the slave's back. Worse than the odors and tumult of the slave pen was his touch, yet the slave smiled grimly. Over his back, down his chest, ran the wrinkled hands that felt like parchment. Then he opened his mouth while Naku examined his teeth, inserted fingers between cheek and and gum to ascertain the absences of sores. He was made to flex his muscles, tun, trot, leap.

Naku indicated his feet and turned to the Arab.

"Narrow!" he grunted.

"That makes for speed and takes naught from strength. All his race are built so," the dealer insisted.

"True," assented Naku. "True."

Then, turning to the chief, he said——

"He is sound."

"But he is a slave and therefore unfit for the festival," the chief protested.

The young warriors standing behind seemed to agree with this.

"A slave!" scoffed the dealer. "Say, a captive! He was taken in combat by the Messalits.

"Bako!" he called out suddenly.

A Messalit detached himself from the group on watch and ran forward, pausing expectantly. His eyes shifted from the Arab to the slave.

"Bako," the dealer resumed, "is this man a fighter?"

"With a rifle he killed many, and struck with his hands at us so hard that he killed my friend—and took from me—these."

Bako indicated the left side of his mouth where, indeed, several teeth were missing.

A laugh went up from the strangers.

"With his hands!" repeated the chief, in wonder. Then to Naku—

"Buy him."

Unwise words, for the Arab immediately became reluctant.

"You will not pay the price he is worth——"

"What is the price?" Naku asked.

The Arab picked up a wooden vessel which had contained boiled rice, perhaps a pint and a half in capacity.

"This filled with dust."

Stilling Naku's protest, the chief took from one of his men a skin bag, which, poured out, almost filled the dish with dust and small gold nuggets.

"Paid?" the chief queried shortly.

The Arab assented with a gesture.

"What does he speak?"

"Arabic, his own tongue—and any other tongue if he but hears it for a space of two moons."

Turning to the slave the dealer added—

"Is it not so?"

"It is," the slave assented.

Naku gave a start of surprize.

"He did not call thee, 'master'!" he pointed out.

"I call no man 'master,' least of all this dog," the slave spoke up unexpectedly.

The Arab lifted his whip.

"Wilt thou allow him to strike me?" the slave asked of his new owner. "When I am thine——"

The chief's laugh boomed out. "No. If he strikes defend thyself with my permission——"

The Arab lowered his hand and turned away.

There was a subdued snickering among the slaves.

The chief signed the slave to follow, and turned and went down an embankment to a narrow strip of sand on which canoes were beached. At his approach the paddlers tugged at the cross-pieces and dragged the largest of the canoes out into deep water. The head man carried the chief into his place, a sort of throne arranged amidship. Naku's seat was at the rear and the warriors were scattered among the paddlers.

The slave made as though to proceed to the stern among the baggage, but the chief indicated that he might lie at his feet. He did so.

"*Ako wo!*" the voice of the steersman resounded.

The paddles dipped. The craft, reaching the center of the river, turned its long pointed nose down stream. The captive looked about him. On either side, the banks rapidly rushing by; in the canoe, thirty-four negroes.

He, alone, was white.

"TELL me thy name?" the chief asked him abruptly.

Before he had been a piece of merchandise worth so much. Now he was being asked his name!

"Jean Triton," he replied, surprized at the effort necessary to speak the name he had borne so many years.

"Yan Twitan," repeated the chief, twisting his tongue with difficulty around the unfamiliar syllables. "What does it mean?"

True, with these people, family names should have a meaning. Triton—"Sea God"—had been his nickname when a boy.

"It means River God," he explained, knowing he could not convey the other meaning to the old chief who had never been outside his forest.

"River God," the chief mused aloud. "And what may a River God do?"

He who has been alone for many months, or among people closer to the animal than the human, can understand that speech is as much of a necessity to a civilized man as food and drink. Triton had been starving for it. The other slaves had belonged to primitive bush tribes and could speak nothing but food, sleep, and women. The chief seemed inteligent. Here was a chance to talk!

"Many moons ago, more moons than thou couldst count on all the fingers and all the toes of all the men of thy people—my people commanded the rivers with a trident."

He held up his fingers in illustration.

"Three prongs——"

The chief laughed.

"Thou art a story teller," he said, "and thy name will be 'Three Prongs' among us."

Seeing that his mythology was received skeptically, Triton laughed in his turn, and thereafter remained silent. The paddlers were hurrying now. The stream narrowed. Far ahead sounded the snarl of angry waters.

"Thou shalt have a chance to command this river," the chief pointed out as the canoe hurled around a bend, and came into a space of whirling foam from which projected razor-like rocks.

The steersman guided the boat, in and out, for several miles, panting his orders in quick succession. The chief and Naku were impassive, scarcely giving a glance when the craft seemed headed to destruction. Triton, who had hung on to the braces crossing from side to side near his bended knees, sighed with relief when smooth, mirror-like water was reached.

Formidable, smooth and steep as the masonry of a fortress the banks rose, perhaps two hundred feet high, like the walls of a cañon. Over the crest, trees could be seen. Vines grew down the sides, subsisting on the meager soil in the crevices of the rocks. The surface of the water darkened as the canoe sped into this gully. The air was damp and cold. Birds of huge size, which Triton classed as birds of prey, circled above their heads silently, as if their wings were muffled with velvet. Over the side he could see the fleeting shadows of fish.

"Three Prongs—see!" called Naku.

He pitched bits of raw meat overboard. The fish threw themselves forward, fighting for the food.

"They worry a man as dogs do," Naku proclaimed, silently laughing.

He turned and grunted a few words to the paddler next to him. The man rolled his eyes and shook his head.

"See—" went on the old man in Arabic—"I offered him gold to put his foot into the water and he will not."

Again he shook with mirth.

It is in keeping with the profession of medicine-men to lay stress on anything that deals with death, for through fear of death they hold their power. Triton decided that Naku wished to take away any thought of escape he might entertain. Why did Naku threaten such a finish? The only reason to risk death in escape is death coming in any case. What other death? There had been nothing in the words to cause him to think he was being led to death. But in the tone, the look of the narrow eyes that slanted upward as those of a Mongol.

"Have we far to travel before we reach thy home?" he asked to break the sudden silence that chilled the air.

"Yes, until sundown."

The cliffs became higher, the passage darker.

Suddenly, they were in a tunnel, dark as night. A sputter of sparks astern and a torch was lighted from the embers of the fire, kept alive there on a layer of wet sand. This light, passed from hand to hand to the man in the bow, was held high.

The walls of the cave were covered with a leprous growth of moss, greenish, sweating in tiny drops. When the paddles were taken in to give the men breathing space, these drops fell into the water with tiny splashes, monotonously, endlessly it would seem. On the left side ran a fashion of overhanging ledge, covered with the same moss, where live things crawled. Rats—snakes—he could not discern.

He understood why the Arabs had never explored the stream.

They were still between cliffs, but the crests were further apart, and the sun shone down to the river.

"HOW came thou to be a captive?" the chief asked abruptly.

Triton related, in stilted Arabic, his history in Africa.

A sergeant of French Colonial Infantry he had entered the Wadai with the Flatter Mission in June, 1914. The combats had succeeded one another on the Darfur border. The last of the Arabs of the Soudan under the leadership of a wise sheik, had grouped the negro population into temporary unity. The three hundred *tirailleurs* (native sharp-shooters) from Dakar, and the handful of white non-commissioned officers, two lieutenants, Captain Flatter had done their best against tremendous odds.

With every battle a handful of *tirailleurs* were killed, and, although the enemy lost ten to one under the fire of the precise Lebel rifles, retreat became necessary. An advance, no matter how difficult, is preferable to retreat—for, cloak it by whatever name, withdrawal, retreat, a flight is a flight, a sign of weakness, an encouragement to the foe. Flatter had been killed from ambush. Without a capable head, the column wavered, changed route, became entangled in a maze of trail. The tribes of the whole Wadai had come to the final assault.

Formed in a square, bristling with bayonets, the *tirailleurs* had fought. Night had come, then morning, and the column, reduced to less than fifty men had found itself surrounded completely, by savage hordes, well armed, inspired by the sense of victory. The sense of victory—the supremacy of self over others, more potent than gunpowder, more intoxicating than strong wine, the sense of victory that sends men reeling into battle, lust in their hearts.

The Messalits had attacked at dawn, through the bushes, with lances and swords, scorning the rifle. In and out of tree clumps, leaping through the high grass like fiends, they swept down on the pitiful remnant of the column. In thirty minutes all was over. The square was broken. The defenders made stands in isolated groups with the reckless courage of men who have nothing to lose. The officers and non-coms went down, hacked by spears.

Triton, with half a dozen *tirailleurs*, retreated behind a ridge and organized a semblance of order. The fighting resumed for seconds and then a wave of the attackers submerged the tiny islet of men from all sides. Triton had stood alone. The butt of his piece shattered, his bayonet left twisted in the ribs of a warrior, he had grasped the barrel of the rifle and used it as a club until it was torn from him. Then with his bare hands he had plunged upon them, his strength multiplied by the feeling of defeat, by the rage of a man of superior race overcome by brute force. But they strove to take him alive, to have one man as a trophy of victory.

When his legs and his arms were securely held by a dozen men, the desire to battle left him, and the instinct of self-preservation took its place.

For some time after his capture he had lain in a hut close to the battlefield and submitted to the rough surgery of the negroes who, with strange drinks and applied poultices of herbage, attempted to save him. He survived even these ministrations, and was taken through the towns of the inner Wadai, a halter about his neck, shown off as a bear in a country show. The children jeered. The women threw filth and stones. The hot African sun burned his body until the flesh came off at the touch. Then he became tanned, acclimatized, the endless marches toughened his natural strong body; the plain food—boiled rice, sweet potatoes, half-raw meat—had gone to muscle. Leading the life of the natives, he became as rugged, and tireless as they, with the added strength of a fiery spirit, a well-regulated, observant brain. Faced with the problem of life under new conditions, he had met it, and won out.

As he spoke to the chief something of this triumph crept into his voice. Even with the unfamiliar tongue he managed to be eloquent, swayed the chief's feelings to his own moods. He showed him the scars of spears, the horny part of his feet caused by constant rubbing against tough soil.

"Thou wilt know how to die," summed up Naku, who had been listening.

THE bow of the canoe grounded. The river was still buried between two high cliffs and the current was swift. In the failing light of the sinking sun, Triton discerned a narrow sandy beach. A group of warriors approached, armed as hose in the canoe. Pass-words were exhanged. The party landed. Triton turned, nd saw the paddlers, helped by the newomers, hoist the canoes on wooden frames eside other crafts of lesser size.

The contrast of the reddish cliffs and wishing foam-specked water with the last low of day reflected in each whirl of the urrent, was intense. The spectacle made im fear the apparition of some antediluian monster, which alone would be in eeping with the rugged face of nature.

The chief reached the foot of the cliff and started up a light wooden ladder, fastened to the rocky wall by ropes which were twisted about pegs driven into holes drilled into solid stone. The others followed Naku, who showed an agility unexpected in one of his age. One of the warriors touched Triton on the shoulder and motioned upward with his thumb. The white man ascended the precarious, rickety support and at length attained a platform, or rather a ledge, a few feet in width, which ran along the belly of the ascent.

Here keenness of eye and swiftness of foot were needed. He marveled at the skill and unconcern of the men ahead of him. They jumped across four-feet gaps without hesitation, or ran along the light planking, disposed here and there to facilitate progress, while he had to collect himself, pause, before daring to take a first step, clutching at the parasite plants that here and there found root. They came to a ladder. As he carefully ascended this, he looked down.

Foreshortened, tiny, were the men and the canoes below, while the cliffs pointed down to the narrow river like the sides of a funnel. Up this funnel came the roar of the water. He hesitated, seized with sudden dizziness, but a light tap on the small of the back with a spear haft urged him on. He ascended more ladders, followed ledges, climbed again. He did not look down.

His arms ached from the tight grip he took on the uprights, for the rungs were insecure and sometimes gave way underfoot. His fingers smarted from the splinters, and he was half-sick from fatigue.

"Halt!"

The smooth cliff rose before them. There was no apparent means of progress. The negroes nonchalantly sat and rested, but Triton braced his back against the wall, and looked with awe at the brink six feet away. In reply to shouts from the chief, a rope fell close by. This was knotted, and through each knot passed a wooden rung. Two of the warriors held the end firmly and the chief went up. Naku followed as soon as a call from above told of a safe arrival.

Before Triton reached the top he counted forty-four rungs. All averaged eighteen inches apart. Over sixty feet.

Night had now fallen completely. Before him spread a plateau back of which stood another cliff, sharply defined against the starry night. He attempted to recall the maps he had studied, showing Central Africa. Where could he be? The river might be the Mbomu. But the maps had shown no great mountains.

Bah! Maps of Central Africa! Who knew this country? Explorers, wandering through, had no time to investigate, might have passed within twenty miles, and seen nothing. For what can a handful of men perceive, worn and haggard from months of travel in a hostile country, making their way from water-course to water-course, guided by seized or bribed guides, even more ignorant than themselves? Had not the great missions, Stanley and the rest, passed within a mile of palisaded towns crowded with hundreds of warriors without being aware of their existence, and into which succeeding missions had blundered?

The Dark Continent—dark indeed!

"Forward!" came the order. "Do not linger, Three Prongs."

Three Prongs! Three lives, perhaps—one as a white man, one as a slave—one as —what? He fell into line. The rhythmic cadence of the warriors' step, far different from the shuffle of other blacks, lulled him. One—two— He recalled that the Roman Legions had kept step in the maneuvers necessitated by their organization—a wall of shields, bristling with lance heads moving down the field——

Led by two warriors, Triton crossed a town. To his surprize he found the usual African grass huts. From the intricate ladders, and the speech of their chief he had imagined, he knew not what! Civilization? Stone houses? The superior knowledge lay in the disposition of the streets, which crossed at right angles and were clean and free from grass. There was no noise of animal life. The inhabitants were grouped about fires, talking, singing, dancing to the sound of tom-toms, the universal instrument of primitive people. Whe race wants music, it seeks it in the hammering of a hollow vessel across which is stretched a skin—the simplest instrument, easy to make. Music is rhythm—rhythm is music.

The warriors halted before a long palisade, and at their cry a gate swung open, not from one side to the other, but upward, sliding into place creakingly. Within, there was a short conference, then his guards departed. Others took their place and he was marched across an esplanade, to a long, low building three hundred yards away. The door was opened, revealing a vast hall, down the center of which burned a line of fires, on which cooking pots were simmering. The smoke escaped through holes in the ceiling. Along the walls lay mattresses of straw on which were men, some asleep, some squatted—busy at various tasks.

Triton was conducted to a free space, and provided with a wooden bowl filled with boiled rice and bits of meat. His guard then left him.

He ate, and then tried to get into conversation. No one seemed willing to talk.

The door suddenly swung open.

Torch-bearers entered, followed by warriors, the copper of the arms glinting dully. Behind strode old Naku who came to a stop in the center of the room. The soldiers ranged themselves behind him. All had been awakened by the increase of light and now gathered opposite the newcomers.

Naku cleared his throat and addressed them in his own tongue, then in Niam Niam, then in Arabic. This last, Triton understood.

"Tomorrow is the first day of the festival. Water will be supplied for the ablutions. It is the will of our god that you should all do your best. The most deserving shall earn his reward."

He turned to go. Triton followed and called to him in Arabic.

"Naku—Naku——"

The old fellow paused and halted his guards who were about to seize the white man.

"What dost thou want?" he questioned softly.

Triton, filled with a sudden sense of evil, could not for the moment frame his question. He stood with hands outstretched.

"Come, speak!" ordered Naku.

"What dost thou want of me?" he faltered, at last.

"I? Nothing—"

"What is this place?" Having once broken his calm, Triton shot the questions rapidly. "And the festival—what will be my share? What is it all about?"

"Thou shalt see."

"Speak not in riddles—answer me!" Triton was angry now.

"I can not answer. Thou wilt have to take thy part—even as I. We are all servants of the same master."

"The chief?"

"No—our god."

At his utterance of the sacred word, as if moved by a mechanical instrument, the warriors lifted their hands to their eyes, as if to shut out a powerful, glaring light.

"Your god!" Triton ejaculated.

"Yes, he who gives us our bodies, food, women, all that is dear to the heart of a man."

"I know him not."

"But it is given to thee to fight for him."

"Fight! Against whom?"

Naku indicated the other inmates of the hall.

"Against them," he pronounced solemnly.

"Why?"

But Naku was out of patience. He gave a gesture of indifference and left. Triton looked after him, dumfounded. The others in the shed were returning to their beds, silently. Triton noticed for the first time that they were not all of Naku's race, a good two-thirds being strangers, natives of the Wadai, the Niam Niam country.

He addressed them in Arabic, went from one to another and repeated his question:

"Where am I? Who are Naku's people? Why must I fight?"

A huge negro, a Senegalese, from his rangy build, intercepted him— "Thou art French, monsieur?"

"Yes."

"*Y a bon!*" grunted the Senegalese.

"Thou wert a *tirailleur?*"

"Yes, m'sieu."

"When were you taken?"

"With the Moll column."

"Four years ago——"

"I lost count of time," explained the Senegalese. He was now speaking in Arabic, which he evidently found more fluent.

"What are these people?"

"They call themselves Kapous."

"And why do we fight in the morning?"

"It is a long story. These people say their god who gives men strength and a beautiful body, enjoys the spectacle of combat. So, their chief and Naku go abroad every year to the places where the slaves and captives are offered for sale. If a man is born a slave, they refuse him. If he has been caught in battle, thereby showing he is of a fighting race, they purchase him. Within their own race they select youths of the best build, the bravest, and train them with the others for combat. It is regarded an honor.

"At this moment, counting thee, there are thirty-six men in the shed; eighteen of different races, eighteen youths of the Kapous. Every day, the guards set us to exercise, lifting great stones, jumping, running, so that legs and arms will have symmetrical development. Tomorrow when the sun is at its height, Naku will give a sign. The first pair of fighters will go out and wrestle until one is fallen; then, whether he be a stranger or a Kapous, the guards slay him. That is not done to please the god, but so that friendship may not enter in the contestants, and they will at all times put forth their best efforts." The negro laughed. "That is why they refused to speak with thee."

"I wondered!" Triton put in.

"There will be a first set of eighteen combats, supplying eighteen winners, followed by nine combats, leaving nine men. When these are paired off, there remains one man who lacks an opponent, and has the opportunity to rest. All pray for that advantage, designated by Naku at the conclusion of the second set. The four winners of the third set again fight, leaving two—who fight also. When the lucky man comes out he is fresh and meets a tired man. Last year, a giant from Guinea was allowed to rest, and he won. It is he who makes the best impression in the first two bouts that is picked. The crowd cries out to Naku, their choice. Thou seest the importance of a speedy win?"

"What happens to the winner?"

"He is taken in hand by the warriors, kept in trim. His food is chosen by Naku. He runs, jumps, lifts weights, makes his body perfect for a year."

"To fight the next?"

"Wait—I shall tell thee. The festival is held a few days before the rainy season and the winner of the previous year is sacrificed at the conclusion of the festivities. The new winner is put into training—see?"

"And so they kill him?"

"Yes. It is to give their god a yearly pattern to model the Kapous after."

Again he laughed. He was evidently a merry fellow.

"Have other tribes the same custom?" Triton questioned.

"Yes. In the Soudan. The white man has tried to stop them, but the medicine-man still sacrifices men and women to the gods."

The offer of human sacrifice—so had the Druids of old Gaul and Britain and savage nations all over the world! But nowhere was this deification of the physical pushed to this extreme.

He voiced a sudden thought that came to him—

"So, tomorrow, I may fight thee?"

Again the Senegalese grinned, and, drawing his knees close to his chin, hugged them. Triton glanced at the massive forearms, the sweep of the shoulders, the bony frame, the black skin, reddish in the fire-light, stretched by the muscles.

"No," the black said confidently. "I am rated the best. I shall be put aside to rest. Naku has so hinted."

"There are men as strong as thee among them."

Triton indicated the sleepers.

"No," the other denied. "In Dakar, when but a youth, I exhibited my strength to tourists who visited the town in the brief stops South African Mail boats make there. I performed nights before the Hotel d'Europe, twisting coins between my fingers, bending horseshoes with my hands. In the *tirailleurs*, the lieutenants often called me to show my strength to the officers just come from France. It is certain that I shall win tomorrow."

"That will earn thee but one year's life," objected Triton. "Unless thou escape in the mean time."

"I shall," replied the Senegalese. He leered comically. "They are not all men here. We are allowed to visit the town once a moon. I have obtained a rope long enough to reach the first ledge if tied to a tree—and from there, the ladders."

"At night?"

"At night—on all fours, feeling with my hands. With liberty and Senegal at the end, I'll succeed."

"Why can not we both try tonight? You would not be the loser."

"I can not go now. I must wait until the rainy season, when the river swells, covers the bank and the guards are withdrawn and the canoes taken far away to be beached in safety. The cliffs end five leagues down stream, where one can get around and into the bush. In the bush a man can escape."

"Canst swim twenty kilometers?"

"The will to save one's life makes one a bird, a fish."

He laughed again.

Triton admired his resolution.

"But the man-eating fish?" he could not help but ask.

"Naku has frightened thee. Bah! I have seen them in the Senegal River. They will not attack a live man. The way will be short because the current is swift and will carry me."

"On the land side there is no way of escape?"

"There is but one trail, well watched, a bare plain behind the mountains for many miles, like the great desert. The water holes are guarded by the Kapous, and beyond is the Niam Niam country. The Akos, the dwarf people, all eat men and that road is much traveled by herds of cattle and flocks of sheep—coming here."

Some one, in the semi-darkness, grunted a few words.

"He wants to go to sleep; says he will need all his strength," translated the black, adding. "I will sleep, also——"

Triton stopped him:

"A last question. If there are so many combats how can they be fought in one afternoon?"

"A small torch is lit, and, should both men be alive when it is burned out, the chief declares the winner and the loser dies."

"Simple," ironically remarked Triton. "How long do the torches burn?"

"Perhaps three, perhaps five minutes, plenty of time for a strong man. Good night."

The Senegalese rose, and his tall form merged into the darknesss of a far corner, away from the radiance of the flames.

Triton was depressed. He had noticed the size and splendid condition of the negroes in the shed. Even with his great strength, should they grasp him, he would have little chance. Brain power and education would weigh but little against the cunning and might of primitive people.

THE steel blades of the spears glistened in the sunlight. The copper rings and hilts glowed dully against the black skins of the warriors.

Triton looked about him.

The group of gladiators in which he found himself, was situated on the east side of the great festival square. Directly opposite, two hundred yards away, sat Naku on a throne of massive, shining metal, surmounted by a canopy of gorgeous feathers which stirred gently in the cool wind that blew across the plateau. On the north side, the chief presided on a throne no less ornate than the medicine-man's, raised high above the ground, resting on a platform carpeted with leopard skins. Behind him crowded his wives, daughters, and sons too young to bear arms. On the south, the crowd, a multitude of old men, women, and children. A triple row of warriors, seated on the ground, lined each face of this square.

Some of the men on guard over the fighters had graying wool, others seemed hardly to have won their leather breech cloth and sword. But all were well built, with mobile, intelligent faces. Behind Naku, rose, what Triton surmised to be the sacrificial block—a slab of whitish mineral held up by four stubby cylinders of brass, elevated on a pyramid of red stone at least twenty feet in height. At Naku's left was a fashion of gibbet, from which hung a large hoop of metal, swinging at the end of a solid chain, and a great club made of the same metal, shaped like a sledge hammer. On his right a pole terminated into an iron loop into which was slipped a thin bundle of twigs, no doubt the torch mentioned by Senegalese. Near at hand a warrior nursed a fire, the smoke of which, after rising straight a few feet, caught in the wind and was blown across the square, permeating the atmosphere with a disagreeable acrid smell. In front of the chief were twenty-four huge tom-toms ornamented with a profusion of bull's tails, skins and metal ringlets.

The arena, an oblong frame of planks a foot high filled with solidly trampled earth free from stones, occupied the center of the square.

The sun was not as hot as usual for the

time of year. The day was ideal. Not a cloud in the blue of the sky that dropped to the horizon in a sublimely beautiful curve. Triton estimated the time as close to noon.

A sigh of expectation came from the multitude——

"They are about to begin."

A few scattered cheers went up, growing in volume and violence.

The chief lifted his hand for silence. Naku rose, stretched both hands toward the sun and spoke monotonously. Then he turned with a signal. An attendant at the gong lifted the hammer.

Clear as the clang of a brazen bell, musical, the sound hung in the air for long seconds after the impact of brass on brass.

The sudden silence of this multitude was awe-inspiring.

"Ako!"

Naku's voice seemed to boom with the blast of bellows.

The order of the fighter's appearance had doubtless been arranged in advance. A warrior came among them, tapped two on the shoulder. They got up and trotted toward the arena. There they faced each other. Naku gave a sign. The torch flared with the crackling of dried twigs.

The men crouched, hands forward, feet braced. One was a Niam Niam, a great burly fellow with a barrel-like torso disproportionate to his stumpy legs. He seemed all arms and chest. The other was a Kapous.

The sun being straight overhead, the shadows, ridiculously small, moved about at the men's feet, lengthening and shortening with each wary movement. The Niam Niam took the offensive. With a leap he bridged the distance separating him from his opponent. A whirl of arms and legs and the bullet headed black rose alone.

The gong resounded. The torch-bearer shook the pole vigorously. A new torch was inserted. The Niam Niam came back to his place. The next pair marched out. As they passed, Triton saw the sweat dripping from the brow of one, while the other, a lean Bambara, was impassive; the dead, cold impassiveness of the somnambulist. He leaped forward, panther like, tripped his opponent, who gained his feet, shook his head and resumed a slow, patient approach. The torch went out. The chief held up a finger. Triton turned his head aside. The Bambara came back.

Pair after pair went out and only one man returned.

"My turn. Watch!" whispered the Senegalese, as he marched by, grinning confidently.

He had to face a Kapous. The two gathered themselves, knees bent, arms extended. A scuffle. The Senegalese came back.

Triton felt a slap on his shoulder. Calmly enough, he strode forward to the center where he awaited his adversary, arms folded. Another Kapous came forward, a well-developed fellow with crisp black wool curling on arms and chest. His eyes showed beady between narrowed lids. He crouched as the others had done.

Triton heard the first sputter of the torch.

He placed his left foot forward, extended his left arm, hand closed in a knuckly fist, the right was held at the height of his stomach—the boxer's pose.

TIME rolled back.

He was in the Velodrome D'Hiver, in Paris. On the floor, Sailor Duncan, the English champion, sprawled, arms outstretched. The maniacal crowd stood in their seats, hats flying into the ring:

"Triton— Triton— Triton!"

Sailor Duncan's pink skin against the stained canvas—the referee's hand pumping up and down, and he, himself, holding ready the blow that was not needed.

"Ten—out——"

THE Kapous leaped.

Triton side-stepped the necessary distance and released his right toward the negro's jaw. Had the man been shot through the brain, he would not have fallen more heavily. He did not try to struggle up. His fingers, even, did not twitch. The crowd roared approval, as the crowd in Paris had done—the gap between civilization and barbarism bridged by one knock-out wallop.

The torch was extinguished in a shower of sparks.

"Three Prongs! Three Prongs! Three Prongs!"

The crowd knew his name.

"Ah!" greeted the Snegalese. *"La Boxe?"*

Triton was silent. He had seen the steel dig into his victim's back.

Triton easily won the bout in the second series.

He was unmistakably the idol by now. His appearance in the ring was greeted by a great ovation, when he went out to face the Niam Niam, the winner of the first combat. He stretched the black out with a single blow in the stomach.

A murmur ran through the crowd, a murmur that soon swelled into shrieks:

"Three Prongs! Three Prongs!"

They wanted him favored. Naku assented with a gesture.

Luck was his.

WITH the excitement that had at first supported them wearing off, the gladiators took longer with the bouts and all but one was terminated by a decision of the chief. This happened to be the encounter between the Senegalese and the Bambara.

Triton's companion of the night before allowed himself so to be tripped by the reddish negro and pretended serious injury. The Bambara leaped and was met with an upward kick given with all the power of gathered leg muscles. Thrown on his back, senseless with pain, he was an easy victim of the Senegalese.

From the first, Triton had the impression the big black would play an important part in his life and so he was not surprized when he found himself facing him in the arena.

The torch sputtered.

The repeated noise was aggravating, counting the seconds as precisely as the ticking of a watch. The black put up his hands. Perhaps this was imitation, perhaps genuine. Triton would take no chance. If he knew boxing, even a little, his superior bulk would be in his favor.

And so the Frenchman bounded forward, feinted, and brought his right against the jaw, below the ear. The negro shook his head, dazed, but did not fall. Triton knew that his knuckles were injured, his arm numbed to the elbow. He lowered his head and attacked with ferocity, struck out with his injured hand and with his left, hooks that drummed on the lean stomach muscles, on the ribs. His head on his opponent's chest he put forth all his strength. Suddenly he became aware that there was nothing in front of him. His head cleared. He looked down. The Senegalese lay on his back in the dirt, blood oozing from his mouth.

The gong vibrated loudly and shouts and calls blended into one great surge of sound. He fell to his knees, worn out by the expenditure of strength.

A winner—without having received a blow!

Having gained his feet he faced the crowd and bowed ironically—strange people, indeed, who paid for their pleasure with death.

IN THE open, a battalion of Kapous was maneuvering, precisely, forming solid phalanges, a line of leather-covered shields, bristling with lances, running forward, stopping, resuming. The unity of movement gave the impression of an immense caterpillar, articulated in a thousand joints. At one time, the spears flew through the air, and all buried in the ground within a space of four feet on a line of forty yards.

Reformed, the outfit charged forward, whirled suddenly, ran back to face about and present an unshaken front to an imaginary foe. The favorite movement of Alexander the Great, originated in Sparata, kept alive through the centuries, ancient yet ever new! Simulated flight had won the battle of Hastings. Leonidas had tricked the Persians thus. Napoleon had known the value of the move.

Triton could but look and admire.

The gong suddenly boomed its musical note and the field was cleared as if by magic.

Naku decended from his throne and took the head of a procession. From the tomtoms came a dull drumming, as the rumble of a far-away thunder, muffled, mournful, a noise as of drums wetted by rain. A funeral march?

Behind Naku came a squad of soldiers, then, walking alone, a negro. His lofty statue towered over the tallest of the guards. He was stark naked, his body shining with oil. Anointed for the sacrifice!

Behind, another squad closed the procession.

The negro was brought before the chief, who rose, lifted his hand, and spoke sonorously. The warriors shook their spears and shouted. The captive remained impassive. Triton respected him. Courage is a great quality. There is a mead of admiration for the brigand but none for the poisoner. Courage redeems—and this black seemed deified by his sublime resignation.

He was a Sousous from Guinea and bore the tribal marks. Perhaps he was thinking the shores of his native land, of smiling onakry, white houses among the mangoes, ivers where hippopotami splash on moont nights, where he had played as a child, randishing spears made of sticks. As he assed, Triton got up and lifted his hand in alutation.

"Thou art a man," he said.

At the pyramid the guards stopped, and Naku ascended alone.

Reaching the top, he turned, and motioned to the Sousous. Without hesitation the black took the first step, another. As he neared the top, his pace slowed, he seemed to waver. On the last rung of this barbaric Calvary, he paused.

The tom-toms boomed louder.

Triton, fascinated, tried in vain to close his eyes. Curiosity won over horror.

The negro stretched himself on the stone.

The time had doubtless been calculated. The orb of the sun had sunk so that the crest of the pyramid was framed in the dilated disc, made larger by the first mists of twilight. The stone, the prone man, Naku, were silhouetted in black against the orange glow.

Naku lifted his hands to heaven, palms upward, and his voice came across the space. The tom-toms were hushed now. Triton glanced to right and left, saw the soldiers rapt in mystic devotion. They believed. America has the electric-chair, France the guillotine, England the gibbet—for the good of the multitude. This sacrifice was for the good of the many, or so they believed.

Naku's arm, holding a broad curved blade, snapped down quickly.

A sigh came from the crowd—no shouts—no jeering. All over!

Triton wondered why the wind suddenly shifted to the west. The soul of the Sousous going home?

As though satisfied, the sun sank out of sight, leaving the west aflame, like the open mouth of a titanic forge.

TRITON was marched back to the palisaded enclosure under escort, where he was assigned to the hut just vacated by the Sousous. The place was clean. Four posts stuck into the soil and stacked with supple strips of bark and dried grass served as a bed. Beside the cot was an iron cooking-pot containing some heady palm wine.

Naku appeared presently—old Naku, the real head of the Kapous. He who commanded all. Even the white-headed old warrior they called chief never contradicted Naku. He, the spiritual power, commanded through inner knowledge of the mystical world. He was religion opposed to the sword, subtlety to strength, thought winning over action. Doctor, prime minister, priest, he combined all functions. Through fear of the occult he controlled the chief. Through the might of the chief he controlled the tribe. He combined the physical strength of youth with the wisdom acquired through age.

He now regarded Triton amusedly.

"Art watching over the world?" he asked.

"What meanest thou?"

"The winner is greater than I. I stay and serve. He goes on to glory."

He laughed loudly and smote his sides with the flat of his hands.

Triton saw that the fellow did not believe overmuch in his own well-instituted religion, and was willing to joke in private.

"Tomorrow thou wilt be shown to all the people that they may admire," Naku resumed. "Thou art the first to win three combats in less time than the one."

He reached over and with his wrinkled powerful hand grasped the loose flesh on Triton's stomach.

"Too much rice, not enough meat—we'll take that off and thou wilt indeed be perfect."

"How comest thou to be a medicine-man," Triton questioned, "when thou art such a fine warrior? In other tribes the *ju-ju* is deformed, either in limb or speech."

"Thou comest of a curious race. They come here not alone for plunder, but to learn, to see, collect. Very well, I will satisfy thee. I am what I am, because the god protects me. He did not protect my predecessor, who ordered me slain, and himself died of colic that night. Dost understand?"

"And the people did not protest?" Triton asked, amazed by this frank, callous confession.

"Protest? No. They said 'Naku's god is indeed the best.' "

"And if I should slay thee now?"

"That would not avail thee. Thou couldst not succeed me, for thou art marked for sacrifice."

He laughed again, lifted the cooking-pot and swallowed a long draft of the fermented liquid.

"I can not so laugh before the chief—or the Kapous—but thou wilt understand. That was why I objected to purchasing thee, giving as excuse thy feet. But now, even though thou dost understand, it does not matter. Does it, Three Prongs?"

Naku amiably offered the pot. He seemed merry. When Triton refused he slapped the rounded side:

"That also helps me to talk—one of the joys of a man. Ha! Ha!"

"The god does not forbid drinking, I suppose?"

"No. My god loves men. And I am a man. Knowest a better and stronger man than I?"

Old Naku was drunk. With nothing to lose Triton could afford to take his chance.

"The last platform on the cliff, that on which we awaited the rope, was very short," he said casually.

"No. It runs along the cliff. And shouldst thou care to know, there are no pitfalls on the way. One may descend anywhere and make safely for the first ladder. Is that what thou wished to know? Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Triton flushed. Yes, he had been a trifle obvious. But suppose Naku's observation were true? Suppose he could find the rope and lower himself down the face of the cliff. What then? Would he find himself on solid footing or dangling above a precipice? He would never have the reserve strength to win to the top again.

"I speak the truth," Naku assured him. "I swear it—by this—" He again slapped the pot—"which is sacred to strong men of my years—the sole solace of the old warrior's rainy season—when his eyes water at the memory of his youth."

"But why tell me? I might escape——"

"Try, Three Prongs, try! All try—all fail. One man watched by thousands—" he paused impressively—"and by myself."

"Thou art right," Triton agreed, regretting that he had betrayed his scheme.

"Take that big man from Senegal," Naku went on. "He had a rope. When he left for the combat today I had the rope removed from its hiding-place. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

The last hope for escape was taken away.

* * *

A MONTH went by.

Triton kept account of the passing days by notches on a stick of wood, days which dragged endlessly although the notches seemed to grow in number with startling rapidity.

Then the Kapous designated the eighteen youths for the next year's festival. Triton saw the boy's relatives bid them farewell; no tears, no sorrow. It was an honor to have a son or brother in the waiting list. And to have him come out winner was the cause of great rejoicing. For two years, now, the combats had been won by strangers. The people murmured. For that reason, the group now chosen were the pick of the tribe. A few of the older warriors entered the competition. Enthusiasm was great. The chosen believed their mission to be holy.

A fashion of fighting monks, they were, living in strict training with but one day a month in town, restricted liberty—for all wore on the shoulder a burned brand, to make possible instant recognition, should the fighters stray too far or seem to wish to escape. Triton had escaped this mark because of his late arrival, and being white, he did not need it after the winning.

Naku, who had a grim sense of humor, chose for the year's symbol—three prongs. With malicious eyes, the day of the branding, he asked Triton to sit at his side. The servant, who had been in charge of the torches at the festival, applied the brand. The first man came up, his face as calm as if hewn of granite. The iron touched, the rank smell of burning flesh filled the air. Naku leaped to his feet and applied a salve which he claimed to be sovereign against pain.

"Ah—ha!" he laughed gleefully when Triton seemed interested. "Didst think old Naku knew nothing?" Then he added in a low tone, "Nothing but the pot of strong drink."

One by one the youths were brought before the fire. Naku and the chief watched each man keenly. If he should show the slightest fear he would be withdrawn from the group and sent back to his family. Shunned by all he would eventually do away with himself or stray into the bush to the south. One by one they passed through the ordeal without a sign of weakness. A race of iron. And yet they had been beaten by foreign negroes a month before. He was puzzled. They did not lack courage or fighting spirit.

When the ceremonial was over, they departed.

"THREE PRONGS!"

Triton turned to the chief who had just spoken. Deprived of royal regalia, arms and feathers, he was still imposing in the simple garment of print cloth. His white hair gave him the appearance of a vigorous patriarch. He wore leather sandals, fastened over the big toe by a strap, a black Abraham he might have been—kind, just, according to his creed, sacrificing to his god because he felt sacrifice to be necessary. But there was nothing patriarchal in his words:

"Three Prongs, thou didst finish thy men quickly." In his eyes was admiration, respect. "How dost thou hold thy hands when thou strikest?"

The still mighty arms corded with an impetuous movement.

Triton exhibited a clenched fist to the chief, who ran his fingers over the knuckles.

"Mine is larger," the chief concluded, clenching his own.

"But so were those of the others," Naku put in sarcastically. "And yet Three Prongs smote them once, and down they went. It is not in the putting together of the fingers but the way the hand is brought to the body, that Three Prongs can make men go to sleep."

Triton laughed. Naku had caught the idea of boxing, had even coined the Arabic name for the knockout wallop.

"Thou art right," Triton acknowledged. "One must learn this way of fighting."

"Thou meanest it can be taught!" The chief sputtered in great excitement. "Do the men of thy race fight so?"

"No," Triton owned, frankly. "Most of them, as yet, do not know the science. But the English and Americans do."

Triton knew the Arabic for the English but not for their cousins across the Atlantic. Naku explained to the chief, and Triton caught the words, Egypt—white men—same over water.

The chief's eyes sparkled.

"There are then men of thy color who could beat thee, Three Prongs?"

Triton gave way to unworthy pride:

"No," he answered. "I am the best."

Naku cackled loudly.

"He who comes from afar can lie unpunished!"

Triton remained silent.

"I like thy way of fighting," the chief resumed. "And I would see thee fight against another as clever as thyself in the struggle with closed hands."

"He can not," Naku interrupted sharply. "The fights are not for thy pleasure, or mine, but to find him who is most worthy of the god!"

"Surely it would not displease the god if I saw good fighting instead of always the biting and kicking," the chief pleaded, comically eager. "Think, Naku—two men equally clever, exchanging these mighty blows."

He rose to his feet and attempted to illustrate with a wide swing that sang through the air.

Naku laughed. He was forever laughing. Triton recognized him as the happiest murderer unhung.

"I believe thou wouldst go and fight this way thyself," Naku observed.

"As the god hears me—I would!" Again the swing. "I like the manner."

"The god, in whose name I speak, would not allow Three Prongs to fight in another festival. It would bring bad luck," the medicine-man insisted. He seemed to distrust the chief's sudden interest in the manly art.

But the royal fellow had the making of a fan.

"Naku," he said, "I'm willing to take upon myself all the ill luck, if I but see a fight of this sort."

He ended in a vehement gesticulation, flinging his arms about.

"Chief—" Naku sought to pacify him—"I have a plan. Why not let this Three Prongs teach our youths. Then the spectacle would be thine and the god would not be offended."

"That is well," the other agreed. "But I would have liked to see Three Prongs. I enjoyed that blow he gave the Niam Niam, right where his food went—and he bent in two like a cut twig. And the Senegalese giant—I still remember—his ribs sounded like a tom-tom."

The chief was perspiring now from his demonstration.

Triton saw a chance to gain favor.

"I will teach the Kapous to fight in my way. But what will be my reward?"

"Anything—anything——"

"Except a rope," gently suggested Naku.

"A rope—a rope—what would he wish to do with a rope?" the chief asked in surprize.

"Strangers are fond of rope. You do not understand. It is their way."

"Ah!" The chief was puzzled. "Thou art wise, Naku, to know the wishes of all races."

Naku acknowledged the compliment modestly. Triton longed to strangle him.

"Ask Three Prongs why our men do not win against the other negroes?" the chief continued.

Triton did not wait for Naku to speak:

"Chief, thy men fight always with the sword and lance and only learn hand fighting while in the barrack yonder—while the other negroes wrestle among themselves. On the day of the festival thy men fight after learning but a year. The others spent their childhood and young manhood fighting barehanded. I can also teach thy youths games that will train their eyes to be keen, and give them quickness of foot. But I must have something in exchange."

"What?"

"I will think and tell thee." Triton hoped to gain some privilege that would prove useful.

"Thou wilt ask me," Naku said quietly. "And I will grant it or not—as the god guides me."

GREAT work is accomplished under the spur of one or two incentives; the love of the thing or the wish to forget. Triton found himself with the rare combination of both. He dare not think, and he loved boxing.

Triton set to work with a will. And he had good material; men who did not know the meaning of dissipation, descendants of others who had lived in like fashion through centuries, built on the lines of giants, with eyes trained to quickness in the hunt, muscles coordinating with the brain, loving exercise of the body.

At first he attempted instruction by squad, standing in front of the eighteen Kapous. But the interpreter was a dull-witted slave, whose Arabic was even more limited than Triton's. The first few days were without much result. Then Triton came upon a plan. He took each man separately in front of the others and explained in simple words the idea of boxing—"To hit, and not to be hit oneself."

Soon they were dodging, side-stepping and blocking in fair fashion. At first they went to excess in defensive. Then, little by little, they acquired confidence and hit out. The blows, when landed, were so powerful that Triton asked Naku to have boxing-gloves made, gloves almost the size of pillows.

At the termination of the first month's struggle any one of the eighteen could handle himself fairly well. It was at this time that the first of the strangers was brought in, a great rangy Kouka from Wadai. For the delectation of the chief Triton put him against one of the Kapous. The Kapous won. From then on there was nothing within the chief's power that he would not have granted the white man.

Triton asked permission to wander about the plateau, unaccompanied, promising not to use this permission to escape. Naku restricted this privilege to the two hours preceding sunset. Triton would not try to escape during these hours, but he would use the knowledge gained during those strolls to facilitate his plans.

Try as he would he could not secure a rope.

Then the chief showed a desire for a greater intimacy with Triton. Naku was forced to assent to occasional trips. Triton became acquainted with the southern course of the river, went past the cliff with the canoes, into the low land beyond them, hunted bush pig and hippopotami, trailed the dwarf antelopes that come to the banks of the stream at night to drink and bathe. He imbibed bush lore, knew how to read trails—a broken stick laid across a path declares the same to be unpractical; twigs standing up in the soil means that the trail ends at a stream; blazed trees indicate safe and steady going. He tracked elephants and rhinoceros, saw the great monkeys of the jungle, fought side by side with the gray-haired chief against the cannibal people on the Niam Niam side of the country.

Naku was careful, before each of these expeditions, to obtain his promise to come back. Naku was wise. He knew that the white man keeps his parole.

Months went by—months filled with activity.

Then, one of the chosen Kapous died, and a black named Koulaly took his place.

Koulaly was eighteen years old, with the face of a girl on the body of a giant, the grin of a baby and the strength of a gorilla. Triton took an instant liking to him. By this time he could speak fluently the Kapous tongue and he and the youth became inseparable. Koulaly was six-two and weighed about one hundred and eighty pounds. At the branding, being younger than the others, he flinched. Triton's protest was all that saved him from disgrace, thereby earning the black's everlasting gratitude. Triton gave him the affection one grants a beautiful horse. Koulaly overflowed with complete adoration.

Was not Triton the chosen of the god? And his savior?

He set to work with a will, to learn boxing. After the first three weeks of study, Triton, as was usual with beginners, put on the gloves with him. He surprized his teacher with a perfectly timed one-two punch, and a sagacity in clinches astonishing in a recruit.

From that time the black progressed rapidly. Triton, in spite of his cunning and added experience was soon hard pressed to avoid the terrific assortment of hooks, drives and swings. Then Koulaly won a bout with the best of the Kapous. From then on he was spoken of as the certain winner in the festival.

AS THE day of the festival drew closer Triton attempted to sound Koulaly as to the possibility of escape. But the young black did not wish to subtract himself from the ordeal. Neither did he offer in anyway to help Triton. On the contrary, he hinted that Triton's duty was clear—to stay and accomplish the will of the god. No amount of reasoning could penetrate his ingrown superstition, the ideas instilled into him in childhood. To Koulaly the god was very much alive, real, shown in every manifestation of Nature. And Naku was his representative, and therefore sacred.

In other things Koulaly showed remarkable intelligence. Triton taught him French—the alphabet. He spoke of cities, railroads, and the youth readily assimilated the ideas. But he remained firm in his belief in the god. People had seen the god—Naku, other medicine-men, many of the older women. He was very tall, black, with a white beard and a voice deep as thunder. He had but to extend his arms and the lightning would flash from the finger-tips and annihilate the beholder.

A conclusive proof: Once, he himself, Koulaly, had traveled down stream in a canoe—taking a man exiled by Naku. Suddenly the clouds had gathered and a storm came upon them. Between the cliffs a gash of fire brought with it the roar of thunder, which echoed long. Then a ball of flame fell in the boat. All fell to the bottom. When they arose, the exiled man was dead. And three of the men were blind. It was the truth. Triton could see these men should he care to. They were always begging about the town. And, they had lost their sight because they had seen the god, with their unworthy eyes, standing in the bow of the canoe, with lightning flashes streaming from his outspread fingers. He, Koulaly had not seen, for he had covered his face.

As he recounted the tale, his eyes rolled, and he shivered.

When Triton learned that the days were few before he must ascend the steps of the pyramid, he made a last attempt.

"Koulaly, I must die soon," he said.

"Yes."

"Thy god is not my God. Why should he want me?"

"If thy God were powerful enough he would not allow my god to have thee." Then after a moment he went on in an attempt at encouragement. "Thou saw the Sousous, how brave he was. Thou art my friend and must die well, for people would shame me and say, 'Koulaly, thy friend has not courage.' "

"But the great cities of my countries; wouldst not like to see them?"

"Yes."

"Listen, Koulaly, try to escape with me. If thou dost wrong the god will stop thee."

"All would say I was afraid——"

"But if all the festival fighters agreed to escape—wouldst thou then be afraid to be called cowardly? The Kapous are brave, the strangers are of fighting people, yet they would escape if they had the chance."

"The Kapous would not!"

"Not one by one—but all together. Why not try? Why not let me speak to them?"

Koulaly hesitated.

"Come, let us go to them," Triton said eagerly.

"Art not afraid?"

"No—I am not afraid."

The two hurried toward the shed where the others were gathered about steaming rice pots. They looked up at the sudden entrance, but the greeting was casual.

"Greetings—" Triton began, and then went on hurriedly. "I have words to say."

They grouped about him, respectfully enough, for he was their teacher.

"In a few days we will be dead—unless we refuse to die."

The Kapous murmured. The captives, those who understood the tongue, glanced up hopefully.

"Why refuse to die when the god so wills!" shouted the oldest of the Kapous. "I shall inform Naku of this talk—" he looked threateningly at Koulaly—"and that one of our number has listened to the words."

"I have listened no more than thou." Koulaly suggested. "Speech does no harm."

"Sit down," ordered Triton.

Standing in the circle he looked about for a moment, then began:

"In a city of my land, many years ago, there were men who fought for the gods, and the enjoyment of the people, even as we. This city was called Rome, mightier than any other, its warriors the best. Temples such as you have never seen were there. On the seven hills lived one thousand people for every one in your town. Kapous, it is the truth! Perhaps some of the strangers have seen white men's cities—Speak!"

"I have seen Cairo," was the answer, "and it is indeed great beyond these people's knowledge."

"See—I speak the truth! The fighters in Rome were called gladiators, which means the same as 'sacred men' (the translation was free, but Triton had a purpose to serve). For many years they were patient and died when the people so demanded. Then among them came Spartacus, a man from a far land, who was first a slave, then a fighter. The shedding of his best friend's blood sickened him. He could not understand why he could not fight enemies instead of friends——"

"But the god!" protested the loquacious Kapous.

"The god! If he were so holy and powerful, so kind, so worthy of adoration, would not old Naku seize his short sword, ascend the pyramid himself and bury the blade in his belly to gain the incomparable happiness of being with him? If the god awaits him with gifts, with honey sweeter than that of the bee, milk better than that of the goats, meat such as mortal can not obtain, why does Naku love this life?

"Have you not noticed at the feasts that Naku gorges on the best pieces of meat, drinks more strong wine than water, even breaks the big bones to suck forth the marrow? And if the god protects him why is he guarded, why a servant carrying a sword, a shield and a good spear? Had I at my bid and call a god with lightning in his hands, little would I bother with a dish-faced warrior to cover my body with his shield. Kapous, look! I spit on your god and no blast will come!"

He spat. Several of the Kapous attempted to rise to resent this insult. The others held them back, and it was plain that they were impressed by Triton's words.

"Tell us more about Spartacus," Koulaly asked.

"Spartacus spoke to his friends, as I am speaking to you. They joined him and slew their guards. They escaped from the city—and became men—lived! The name of Spartacus lives among all people of my race. Wherever there are slaves and captives, his example should be followed. I have just now spat on the god—and no lightning followed. What sort of a god do you call him, men, what sort of a god is he? Which of you, dogs and slaves though they may call you, would not strike at me should I say: "I spit upon thee. Thou—or thou—or thou?"

He addressed each man in turn. They all nodded. They would strike.

"Fighters—fight for yourselves, not for an old man who loves wine and meat, not for a god who doesn't protect his name. Come with me—gain the first ladder! We are thirty-six, the best in town. We can gain arms in the city before the warriors gather, win over the post down on the sand bank, take a canoe. I shall lead you to the white men of my race——"

"What happened to this man, Spartacus?" some one interrupted.

Triton lied swiftly.

"He lived long—happy—with many wives." To say that he had been killed after two years would rather put a damper on the new-born enthusiasm. "Come, are you with me?"

"Stay. You spit on the god when Naku is not here," persisted the Kapous who had taken the lead. "Would you strike at the medicine-man?"

"I would!"

"Do so, then!" the words were from Naku.

Unseen, he had made his way to the edge of the crowd. He now came forward. Facing the white man, he stripped off his sword belt, and threw it from him.

"I have no warrior with me," he said solemnly, "and I have eaten heavily of the meat and drank deep of the wine. I am an old fraud! My god does not exist? Kill me, then!"

Triton looked into the fearless old eyes, smelled the drink on his breath, saw the veins in his forehead swell with passion. Yes, Naku, believed himself protected.

"Kill him!" suggested the Kapous, sarcastically.

Triton put his hands forward as though to grasp Naku by the throat.

"Go on!" imperiously ordered Naku. "Thy liberty is assured if I die!"

Even though his life depended upon it Triton could not kill the poor old fool in cold blood. The medicine-man knew white men and their soft hearts!

"If thou wilt fight," Triton suggested.

"Naku fights not for himself. His god protects him!" the old man replied. "If thou art afraid to touch me, take the sword."

He went to his sword, drew it from the scabbard, and handed it, hilt forward, to Triton.

"Strike!" he said gravely. And when Triton hesitated— "See!" Naku pointed out. "The god would not let him kill me, but allowed him to live after the insult, because he is to be sacrificed."

Triton sprang forward resolved to finish the comedy in a tragic manner.

"Seize him!" Naku ordered sharply.

"Naku!" Triton called, after the brief struggle was over. "How didst thou know I would not strike?"

"My god told me," the medicine-man grinned, then he lowered his tone and spoke in Arabic so as not to be understood by the guards. "I saw thee turn when the men were killed at the festival. I knew thou couldst not kill unless in anger." He shook with mirth. "When it is my turn to have the blade I shall not hesitate. But, nevertheless, I love thee. Thou makest me laugh so much."

"I shall tell the men thou art afraid now."

"Of what will that avail thee? Thou wilt be secured until the festival—after that, settle with my god!"

He led the way. As they neared the door of the building Koulaly approached Naku.

"Will I see him before the sacrifice?" he asked.

"No."

"Then allow me to bid him farewell!"

"No!" Naku pushed him aside.

"Farewell!" Koulaly called out.

"Friendship is commendable—and the chosen of the god is well worth the choice of a man as a friend," the medicine-man put in consolingly. "And now, get away. I take Three Prongs to the pyramid."

Triton moved away, after turning a last time to wave at his friend, who stood motionless at the door of the hall. At the pyramid he was taken into an underground room, closed by a heavy stone, lighted by narrow slits in the masonry.

His last chance for escape was gone. Above was the sacrificial block.

* * *

THE funereal drumming of the tom-toms ceased as the procession reached the foot of the pyramid.

Koulaly had won the festival with ease, scoring many knock-outs. As Triton took the first step upward he felt happy that this pupil had won.

"Hasten," called Naku, from the crest of the pyramid. "The sun is sinking!"

Triton looked up at the old man, whose head was already framed by the lower edge of the sun. He could scarcely realize that it was he who was about to ascend. As if in a dream he went up step by step, pausing at each.

He reached the top.

Below him the brazen clang of the gong resounded—and nothing happened. Naku, his back turned to him, was staring across the square to the south. Triton followed his gaze.

A clamor arose from the multitude gathered there, then a confused movement, that slowly gained momentum. The whole mass was approaching on a run. The cries became distinct:

"Three Prongs! Three Prongs!"

Foremost came armed men, the warriors of the regular battalion, spears and swords glinting in the light, shields thrust forward. The attacking formation! Well ahead, a single lithe figure, stark naked, waving a blade in the air.

Koulaly!

"Warriors!" Naku barked a single order.

The men guarding the pyramid, who belonged to Naku's bodyguard, close to a hundred in number, ranged themselves on the fourth step, presented their spears to the approaching tidal wave. As they came against the bristling line of the guards, Koulaly riased his hand.

"Halt!"

Silence. Naku looked at the curved knife in his hand, at Triton, at the crowd. The surprize in his face would have been amusing to the white man, had not his life depended on the decision.

The medicine-man made up his mind, turned and descended the steps, passed through the rank of his warriors. His calm was superb, the set of his shoulders spoke of unlimited confidence.

"What do you want?" he cried, as he stopped within six feet of the nearest men, in the crowd, who now made way for him held by their old respect.

"Three Prongs!" scattered voices in the crowd demanded.

"He is the god's——"

"He is ours," came the reply from a hundred chests.

Koulaly approached resolutely.

"Give us Three Prongs!"

"He is not mine to give," Naku again asserted. "What is the meaning of all this? The chief will be here with his guard and scatter you by force if you persist in interfering with the sacrifice. Be gone!"

"The chief is with us," retorted Koulaly. "It is his wish that Three Prongs should live."

"Thou liest!'"

"No—he speaks the truth!"

The old chief, breathless from the run across the field, broke through the assistants, advanced close to Naku.

"Three Prongs will live!" he said.

"Why?"

"He has given the Kapous victory over the others—he alone. He can teach the men to fight with their fists."

"Koulaly will train them."

"I can not!" shouted Koulaly. "Three Prongs alone knows. One can learn to fight, but one can not learn to teach."

"If the god is cheated his anger will be great!" threatened Naku.

"No," retorted the chief. "He has been cheated and never found out. Koulaly tells me Three Prongs spat upon the god, and naught happened."

Naku retreated to the first step.

"I warn you, and thou also, chief! Should one unworthy foot step on the pyramid, the god will blast you all!"

For answer the chief leaped with joined feet, landing on the steps.

"There!" he shouted. "Where is the blast?"

"Not another step wilt thou dare!" scoffed Naku.

"Bah!" grunted the chief, then loudly. "Listen, all of you! Naku's god doesn't protect him. Once, when we two were ascending the ladders Naku slipped and hung by one hand, and he begged my help—and I—not the god, hauled him to safety."

Naku, who was perhaps in his cups, would not give in. "God or no gods—Three Prongs dies—and all you sons of she-camels can not alter this."

Koulaly addressed Naku's guards—

"Retreat, men, Naku is mad."

"Mad or not—he has our word to protect him—and while he lives, we shall," was the answer.

"You will be killed," asserted Koulaly.

There was no reply except a tightening of girths and a clatter of spears.

"Naku," angrily shouted the chief. "I shall order the warriors forward—and cut thy throat instead of that of Three Prongs. It is too late to sacrifice him tonight—the sun has sunk——".

Naku seized a spear.

"Taste of this!" he threatened. Beneath the medicine-man's skin was that of a warrior. "Come on, chief, I am not afraid of thee, thou gray-headed ass!"

The chief accepted the challenge, but Naku did not stand his ground. He fled upward, shouting:

"Where is Three Prongs—that I may kill him. He is evil luck to me——"

Below him the fighting started. Blows were exchanged. The altar guards resisted like a wall. Triton, unarmed, saw Naku ascending three steps at a time, spear in hand. Then Koulaly broke through the guards, caught up with the old man in two bounds. The spear rattled down on the steps, as Koulaly held Naku aloft.

"Here—down below—take him."

Naku's body flew through the air, passed above the heads of the warriors, fell into the attacking mob. As if by magic, the fighting stopped. Naku dead—the guards were relieved of their oath and had no cause to fight.

The chief puffed up the stairs.

"By the drums!" he swore. "Thou must stay and teach the young!

"STAY and teach the young——" Triton laughed as he uttered the words. The rain made the night even darker than usual moonless nights. He swung at the end of the stout vine, which served him as a rope, over the abyss hundreds of feet deep, at the bottom of which the swollen river roared with the smash of a cataract.

When he had made the speech about Spartacus, a sudden thought had come to him. Spartacus, the Roman slave, had been surrounded in the mountains of Southern Italy, by the thirty thousand men in Cassius' legions. The roads being guarded, he and his band had escaped under cover of the night down the face of an unscalable cliff, by means of creepers and vines tied one to the other.

As soon as the rainy season had started, Triton had put his plan into execution. Crawling through the esplanade, climbing over the palisade, he had gained the open. There, protected from sight by the pouring rain and the dense night, he had reached the forest. Cutting branches, testing their strength he tied to each a twenty-foot vine, the bottom of which was looped to form a rest for his feet. He fastened the first vine to an overhanging tree, slid down it and passed his foot in the loop. Then, taking from his belt one of the pointed branches, he had searched about with hand and foot for a soft earthy spot between the rock surfaces, into which he dug the end of the roughly made stake, until it was buried deeply enough to bear his weight. He repeated this maneuver three times, and now had reached the end of his fourth and last vine.

He suspended himself by his hands, felt beneath him. The level, muddy surface informed him that he was on the ledge. The ladders started two hundred feet away, on the same level. On hands and knees, patiently, with never a hurried gesture, he made his way, regardless of the mud that soon plastered him from head to foot, of the stone that bruised his knees and palms.

He descended. The tumult of the river grew in volume, he shivered in the sudden cold. More ladders.

He lay at the foot of the last one, on the rock. The next ladder had no ledge—the sand bank had disappeared under the water. He rested for the long swim—confident of his success. One did not come so far to fail.

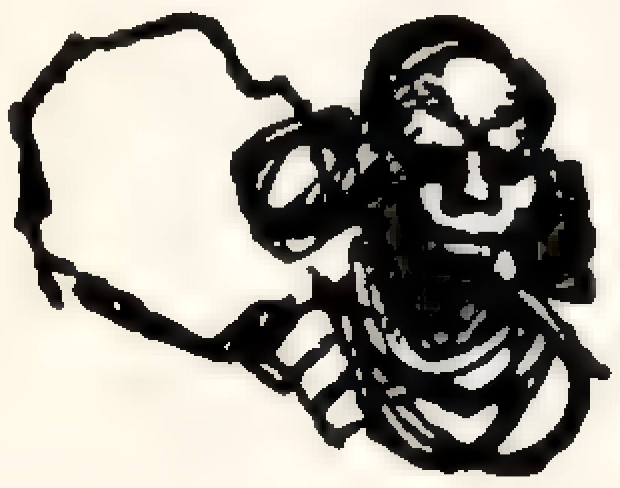
A noise—some one descending the ladder — the man stood above him, barely discernible against the grayish surface of the rock.

Triton rose silently—he was not to be stopped now.

"It is Koulaly, Three Prongs—" the familiar voice of his pupil came faintly over the roar of the river—"I could not let thee go alone—take me——"

A YEAR later, an almost unknown challenger stretched the hitherto invincible black champion flat on his back in the first minute of the second round. Those close enough to the ring to observe the detail, noticed, on the challenger's right shoulder, a three-pronged brand, reddish against the dark skin.

The new champion's manager was a Frenchman, named Triton.



The CAMP-FIRE
A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers

Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

HERE is a simple method of keeping your back issues of the magazine in good condition:

Los Angeles, Calif.

Here is a trick I use to preserve the covers of *Adventure*. As soon as I get the magazine, I cut the margins of the covers with scissors, top, bottom and front. I cut from 1-16 to ¼ inch, so that no cover protrudes over the edge of the magazine. This always prevents those tears which cause unsightly "dog's ears." Is this idea worth giving to the others at the Camp-Fire?—DR. HOBART P. SHATTUCK.

WHILE Bill Adams' story in this issue is a sequel to "The Lure" in our January 30 issue, it is, as you'll see, quite complete and distinct in itself. But there's enough connection to warrant my giving here what I should have given along with the other story.

The verse Bill Adams chose for one of his characters to sing was from a real song and it happened that this particular verse, while harmless enough, had a bit of a flavor we try to keep out of our magazine. So we asked Bill Adams for a substitute and received from him the following. The second verse was the one we used. In the one ending "Taboo, taboo, tabosky-eye, taboo" ex-members of the A. E. F. will recognize an old friend and perhaps learn for the first time the source of a familiar tune.

Lindsay, California.

As regards the song, how would either the first or second verse do, I wonder? I'll give them, and another or so, too. It's a great old temptation to me to stick close to the actual words, you know, because I often hear from some old lime-juice apprentice who lets out a glorious yell at recognizing in me one of the old gang.

First verse (same song)

"Oh, who's that a-knocking at my door?
says the fair young ladee.
Oh, who's that a-knockin' at my door?
says the fair young ladee."

Or, second verse (same song)

"Oh, this is me an' no one else,
says Abel Brown, the sailor,
Oh, this is me an' no one else,
says Abel Brown, the sailor."

If these do not do how will this go,

"Oh, landlord have you any good wine?
ta-boo, ta-boo?
Oh, landlord, have you any good wine,
ta-boo, ta-boo?
Oh, landlord, have you any good wine,
Fit for an officer of the line,
ta-boo, ta-boo, tabosky-eye, taboo?"

(The latter is the same song as they sang in France, "Madamoiselle of Armentières.") Unless I'm mistaken, that is. Same tune, anyway.

Or, here's an old rackety lime-juicer's ditty,

"Cheer boys, hurrah, for I tell ye for a fac',
There's nothin' done in a lime-juice ship
Contrary to the ac',
Then wots the use o' growlin'
Wen ye know ye got yer whack
Of lime juice an' vinegar,
Accordin' to the ac'?"

Or this (always brings the house down in a fo'c'sle),

"Upon the wide, wide ocean
w'en fer away frum 'ome,
Ow bitter is th' sailor's cry,
amidst the surgin' foam,
Now Gawd proteck me mother,
fer she'll break 'er 'eart o'er me,
W'en she 'ears as I am sleepin'
neath the deep blue sea."

Sure, and we're glad to have Bill Adams stick to the actual words whenever possible. Or glad to have him sing words of his own. Bill, I think, can do pretty much as he likes with us, for we seem to like what he likes.

And again as to "The Lure," here's a line from Bill Adams' letter in reference to it—to the dancing contest it told of:

Yes. B'gosh.
I seen her do it.
October '98—Tony Arnaud's place in Oregon. S' fact, sir.—Bill Adams.

CERTAINLY Tracy was no myth. As to his innocence of the crime for which he was imprisoned I don't know. Personally I don't get very much interested in desperadoes and the details of their lives, but I'd an idea that there were many more than one crime charged against Tracy before his escape.

Creston, Washington.

I read an article in the Camp-Fire of January 30, 1922, where J. J. Coleman of Philadelphia wishes to know about Harry Tracy, outlaw.

Tracy was not a myth as Coleman suggets, but really existed. I live within four miles of where he was shot. Last Summer we were at the cave which was his next to the last camp; it is near Almina, Washington. From there on he went east to Creston where he was captured to the southeast of here on the Eddie ranch. The men who got him are well known to us.

Tracy was shot in the leg as he ran from the barn to the barley-field where he made his last stand. He shot himself when he realized the wound was serious. But, for all that, Tracy was innocent of the charge for which he was put in the penitentiary. This caused him to turn desperado, killing his guards and making his escape. Not all, but many of the stories of Tracy at liberty are true.

I hope I have been able to give you light on this subject.—Everett Moe.

BUCK CONNOR has sat at our Camp-Fire and given us his help through "A.A." for many years, but he hasn't had much to say about himself. Here is a newspaper clipping that tells a little about him, though far from all. It does not mention, for example, his service with the Army in the Philippines and Cuba (where he was wounded), the fact that he has been recommended for the Congressional medal, his topping off with a university course, his having been for six years custodian of the confidential files of the War College at Washington, his adoption by the Ogallala Sioux, and a few other little things like that.

Connor was born on a farm near Moundsville, where he spent his boyhood days. His father, brothers and sisters still live at the Mound City.

YEARS ago Connor drove a milk wagon for his father. With the break of dawn he drove the wagon from the farm to Moundsville where he delivred the product of the farm to his customers. But farm life held little fascination for the boy who longed for adventure. Enlisting in the Navy he spent several years at sea. He was with the fleet that made the tour around the world.

Honorably discharged after completing his enlistment, young Connor went West. For several years he "punched" cattle on the ranges of Texas and Oklahoma. It was during this time that he made the acquaintance of many of the Sioux, Apache and other Indians. He soon became a master of the sign language and today speaks the tongue of several tribes.

JOINING the Buffalo Bill Circus, he toured this country with the former scout and frontiersman. Connor was a "bronc" rider in the Wild West show and his daring feats won for him many columns of press notices. He was then featured on the big sheets thrown on billboards announcing the dates the big show would play the city.

Knowing the habits and speaking the language of the Sioux, who christened him "Little Buckshot," Connor was placed in charge of the redskins by Buffalo Bill. One of his many interesting experiences with the Indians during his showdays is the subject of his most recent magazine article.

After leaving Buffalo Bill he joined the Pawnee Bill Wild West show and became secretary of the outfit. He was also in charge of the Indian brigade of that show during its world tours.

ABOUT this time the "movies" were in their "infancy" featuring for the most part Wild West scenes. The scenarios pictured the Western gunman, holdups and other "thrillers."

Connor went to California and New Mexico where he joined motion-picture companies and for a long time was featured on the screen. His riding won for him the admiration of the "movie" fans. For years he and "Bronco Billie" were featured in these Western plays.

Connor then became an assistant director of motion-picture plays.

BUT the love of action and adventure fascinated Connor more than did the "movies" and he left the silent drama to join the Texas Rangers. Doing border duty along the Mexican line he found plenty of action in skirmishes with Mexican cattle rustlers, bandits and in running down Texas "Badmen."

The Texas Rangers are to the United States what the Northwest Royal Mounted are to Canada. Its men are all picked, trained riders, quick on the trigger and without fear. It is one of the most difficult outfits in the country to join. During the days he was a Ranger Connor won his fighting spurs and a name. In the Southwest almost every one knows Buck Connor by name and reputation.

After serving with the Rangers Connor returned to California, where he collaborated with B. M. Bower in writing many Western stories. Now he is writing stories of the Old West under his own name.

Occasionally he hears the call of the wild and goes to Texas, where he spends several weeks at a time patrolling the border with his old troop of Texas Rangers.

THAT anti-weapon law. There has been a flood of letters protesting against it.

Note this. There is an organized campaign to pass this national anti-weapon law. It takes money to start a campaign like that and keep it going. Sometimes it takes lots of money. In this case, who is furnishing the money? *Nobody knows!*

That smells bad. If it is really a campaign in the interest of law and order, as it so very loudly claims, any one who believes in it ought to be proud to appear publicly as sponsor or backer. But nobody does. The inference seems plain—the campaign is *not* really in the interest of law and order and its backer is ashamed or afraid to appear before the public as such. Why is he ashamed or afraid? Who is he? Is it an organization? The criminal class? An inner clique of capitalists? The revolutionaries? Some other crowd who want the body of the people disarmed and helpless?

Or is it just some plain fools who think any evil can be remedied by the simple process of passing another high-sounding law while they continue to neglect seeing to the enforcement of the laws we already have? Law is the vital thing, not laws. Law and respect for it, not laws unenforced and therefore unrespected. And, as a matter of plain horse-sense, how can any law keep weapons out of the hands of those least entitled to have them, the criminal classes? There are and have been State anti-weapon laws. Has any one of them kept weapons from the criminals? New York City, for example, where they "stick 'em up" so much it's lost value as news for the paper; just routine stuff.

Personally I don't believe it's just fools who are behind the anti-weapon campaign. Then who is? I don't know. Nobody seems able to find out. What are they aiming to get out of it? Well, it's something they're afraid to say out loud.

And it's some one who doesn't hesitate to take from us that right, given us expressly and definitely by the Constitution of the United States, "to have and bear arms." A right that "shall not be abridged." If the anti-weapon law doesn't abridge it, what does "abridge" mean? Or, putting it another way, what does the Constitution mean between friends—or crooks?

Here is one of the letters from you, selected at random. There is not space enough for all.

Long Beach.

It would seem that any one but a moron would know that criminals will procure all the weapons they need and that nothing could be more in their interest than a law of this nature. They could go about their various jobs with a comforting sense of security, knowing their victims were wholly in their power, that the lambs were come defenceless to the slaughter; and they need fear only the police, who already have their hands full. Also they might rest assured there would be no danger in attacking a woman in a lonely house. Her physical strength against that of the criminal is all the wise law allows her.

It is time fanatics realized that a country can not be legislated into the kingdom of heaven. Nature must work out her own laws.

We must organize some form of resistance to this idiotic law before its chains are forged on us. The majority of publications seem, of late, to seize upon the most silly quack remedies for the growing pains of the body politic, and laud them to the skies as cure-alls for every evil under the sun.—BURT F. ORDWAY.

Field and Stream is one publication that doesn't. They're fighting the anti-weapon law tooth and toe-nail. I wish that every one of you who wants to *do* something against that proposed law would write to *Field and Stream's* editor, Hy. S. Watson, 25 West Forty-fifth Street, New York City. To defeat this anti-weapon outrage we must organize. *Field and Stream* has raised the standard. I hope every Camp-Fire member who realizes the menace of this anti-weapon campaign will write *Field and Stream* and enlist. Just sitting around and growling doesn't get anywhere.

MORE about wrestling and boxing, from a comrade well qualified to speak:

Albany, Georgia.

I just want to squeeze in around the Fire and get what warmth I can. I want to have my say regarding boxing *vs.* wrestling *vs.* ju-jutsu.

May I say that Comrade R. G. Turner of D. C., is right regarding what Farmer Burns says. Any good catch-as-can wrestler can defeat a good boxer or ju-jutsu expert. Am myself a professional wrestler. Would however say that it is a hard question because the caliber of opponents may not be equal, that is, the wrestler may be a good one, and the boxer a second rater. I believe that it is a question that will never be settled conclusively, even if Dempsey or "Strangler" Lewis were to meet. It is a hard thing to match two men, because it is difficult to determine that one is as good a boxer as the other a wrestler.

I believe that a wrestler can beat any boxer, in fact I have personally proved it, as I threw a boxer inside of four minutes. Would be glad to have a "paper-talk" with Comrade Turner regarding the grand old game of wrestling. Perhaps we will meet some day. Till we meet again, old Camp-Fire.—HENRY A. CLAUSEN (Pro. name, Charley Petersen), Albany, Ga.

PAUL MILLER, it's up to you. We all get careless at times, but if we sit in at Camp-Fire it's up to all of us to play the game the way Camp-Fire plays it. The following letter is from E. E. Harriman:

Los Angeles, Cal.

Will you kindly insert a little something into the next hole you find in Camp-Fire or "Ask Adventure" as to Paul Miller? I packed 38 copies of *Adventure* in a big carton, carried it ten blocks to a postal substation, paid eighty-three cents postage and sent the lot to him at the address he gave in his ad in *Adventure.*

I wrote him two letters of advice, telling him what I had done. Both came back to me this morning. They were stamped "Returned to writer because—" then a blur—"address."

I find there is no postoffice at Davidson nor any express office. I wonder if Paul expected folks to walk to Davidson and carry the magazines he asked for. My package is at Edom, the nearest office. It is a short distance south of Davidson, in Van Zandt County, Texas.

I am not suffering any over the loss of postage and magazines or the effort involved, but Paul Miller needs a swift kick. Others may have been fooled as I was. Any man who advertises in *Adventure* should make sure that his ad gives the correct address, where replies will surely reach him. If he does not, he should be shown up in the same pages that carried his ad.—BIG JIM.

SOMETHING from Albert Richard Wetjen in connection with his story in this issue:

At Sea. Near Astoria, Ore.
On Board the *Admiral Goodrich.*

My typewriter is resting on a stool and I'm sitting on the edge of my bunk. The place is a small stateroom on a little coasting steamer bound from San Francisco to Portland. I'm trying hard to think of something to say to Camp-Fire about "I'll Show 'Em" and I hardly know where to begin.

IT IS a gray day. I can see a rain-squall beating down over the gray sea from the north-east. The decks are wet and tossing. There were only four passengers beside myself in the saloon to lunch. Yet they tell me there are fifty or more aboard. Sounds suspiciously like groans from behind closed doors indicate where some of the fifty are and how they are occupied. I see the stewards are busy hurrying back and forth with mysteriously covered plates and bowls. They look fed up. A grinning seaman has just passed the door leading a gray-haired old lady by the arm. She also looks fed up. The man winked at me and spat tobacco juice overside. Naturally I winked back.

The broad, jovial face of Captain Tibbetts came round the door jamb just now. "How's she going?" he said in his deep voice, his pipe screwed at an angle in the corner of his mouth. "Not bad," said I. "Drop in my room and have a chat later on," he invited. I nodded. "Righto!" The captain disappeared. The third mate, young Mr. Wolff, came along just then. He grinned and stopping put one foot on the brass-shod storm-step. "Come on, come on!" he said, laughing. "Eaten yet?" I indignantly resented the implication I was seasick. "There's a lot hasn't," commented Mr. Wolff. I acknowledged the fact. "Better help me keep watch tonight," went on the third mate. I grunted and thought. It was going to be a wild night. Sort of night a feller likes to spend between the blankets. Still, it would be rather fine to walk a bridge again and peer through night-glasses at half-seen lights.

"All right," I promised. "I'll run up later on." Mr. Wolff went away with the remark he needed some sleep. "I've a new sextant to show you," he added as he passed out of earshot. For a time I was left in peace. Away on the beam—we're heading north something and that makes' it away on the port beam—a couple of small whales are blowing mightily. I think the sea's getting bigger. By the time I go to keep Mr. Wolff company to-night there'll be a mighty swell running. I don't think there will be many at dinner. However, where was I? Oh, about "I'll Show 'Em."

I THINK it started one night in a little room in Eureka, California. There were three of us gathered together, one a sailor, one a journalist, and myself. We talked of many things, as fellers usually do when they get together. The sailor and I revisited many ports. I hadn't been to sea long enough myself to discuss ships and gears and rigs with any sort of authority but I knew enough to talk fairly intelligently. The journalist started off on newspapers and marine "scoops" he had made or heard of. The talk finally came to books, as I had intended it should. I wanted other men's views. I got them.

Finally we all agreed that the ideal book was one that had action, theme, character work and style of writing combined. Above all it had to have action. I had long been wanting to try my hand at a novel. I knew the difficulties in the way. But I thought I might be able to manage it. I couldn't promise to do a good novel for the first one, but I'd make the best of what material and knowledge I had. So then and there I started to think. The result was "I'll Show 'Em," a bad title but I couldn't think of a better one. Anyway it's unique.

THEME I finally had to drop nearly altogether. The slight one there is in the story tries to show the inevitability of age. Character work I wasn't clever enough to do more than attempt. Action I thought I could manage. Also I thought I knew enough about the sea to get a fairly true atmosphere. Style was really something God sent and I couldn't bank on it. Anyway, let's go.

First I had to get a character to start off with and I remembered a second mate, something like *Orville*, whom I sailed under once. He had been master of a big full-rigged windjammer running from Hull to Sydney in his day. Something, drink I imagine, brought him down. He was the oldest officer aboard, also the most capable. He liked whisky. When he lifted his voice in a command the crew jumped as they never did for the "old man." Yet he was not very much liked; too strict, too exacting perhaps. He finished up by falling down number three hatch and getting smashed up on the steel floor. At least it was presumed he fell. Two or three of the men who didn't like him were working in the shelter deck when he started to go down the iron spider ladder. Perhaps he lost his grip on the rungs. I don't know. I was only a kid then anyway. But I've thought since.

We hoisted the second mate to the deck on a hatch. He went ashore to the hospital, unconscious. I think he died, but I never heard for sure. A new second mate came aboard, a fresh young 'un in a new uniform and with a scarce broken voice. The ship sailed and I never was in that port again.

I DIDN'T want my hero to be like every other hero, a big, husky man without fault. So I took that second mate as a groundwork and made him everything a hero almost shouldn't be. As a matter of fact most heroes in real life are slight little men with heaps of vices. I think the vices help make them human. Don't you kind of grow reserved in the presence of a feller who doesn't drink or smoke or swear or do much of anything else that is bad and big and somehow greatly warm?

I don't think I've told everything that started *Orville* off as a character, but I hope I've told enough to give you an idea of what I intended him to be. The plot made itself almost, the action was a matter of trickery, letting something happen all the time. The incident of the cook burning himself when drunk on a red hot stove is true. I helped carry a cook so burnt to his room. He screamed for about a day afterward.

If I've made any bad miscues in sea atmosphere I must plead that my sea years were few and that I've tried to make positive statements only when knew I was right. A man can't learn all about ships and the sea under twenty years, perhaps not even in that time. However, I'm hoping Camp-Fire will understand a bit and be sort of sympathetic. A first novel is a big event in a writer's life and darned hard to do. I'd like no end to hear any adverse criticisms. I don't want the others. I can take them for granted if you like.

I'd like to thank Captain Philips of the *Clan McVickor*, now in Australia, for some good incidents and tips, and also Major Fullerton of the San Francisco *Journal* for help along similar lines. Thanks for listening to me. I hope to come again.—A. R. WETJEN.

SEEMS to me this is the second one of you who wrote in backing up the possibility of a man's shooting himself while drawing from a shoulder holster. Or did I get mixed and give you this same letter before? Anyhow here she is, followed by a letter from Eugene Cunningham, who used this stunt in his story, "Hartley's Luck," in the October 10 issue and spoke of it at that Camp-Fire.

In the October 10th issue E. Cunningham states that he never heard of a man shooting himself in the leg while drawing from a shoulder holster, but thinks it possible. So do I because right now I'm laid up with a game leg that I got the 23rd of last month while drawing a six-gun that has the trigger removed. The thumb slipped off too soon and I got it in the leg. It was a right hand holster hung low on the leg. I knew I'd get it sometime and I think most of them do that play with them that way too.

I don't see why the same thing can't happen from the shoulder.—L. LERNER.

San Francisco.

Thanks very much for letting me see the inclosed. While it's asking quite a bit of a reader to drill his leg just for verification of a fictively-made point, Mr. Lerner's accident was surely apropos.

I've studied this quick-draw business quite a bit; am fairly fast myself in what might be termed "non-objective" practise. It seems to me that my own method is best. I use a holster slung low on the left thigh for a *right-hand* draw. The butt is to the front and in drawing the thumb falls naturally on the hammer, cocking it as the single-action comes out of the holster. The muzzle is flipped frontward with the same motion of the arm that pulls the gun clear.

At practically *no time is the muzzle pointing toward leg or body* and the arm-movement is uncramped.

However, if this —— Sullivan Law goes through, I suppose that we'll not be troubled by shooting *ourselves*—by monkeying with a quick-draw or otherwise. The yeggs will do all the demonstrating while we serve as spectators, if not subjects. Not?

Pardon the heat and the length of this. I'm writing Congressmen and Senators quite warmly, voicing my views on the subject, and I'm still warmed up.—EUGENE CUNNINGHAM.

CONCERNING his story in this issue a few words from William Wells. Don't forget that three of our writers' brigade are named Wells—William, William H., and G. A.

The letter Mr. Wells mentions has not, I think, yet got into Camp-Fire but I'll play safe and register his correction in advance. I'll try to embody it also in his other letter, but I'll bet I fail to make good.

Redmond, Oregon.

The yarn is based on facts, one of them a story that a Crow squawman told me about a raid he was on with the Crows against the Blackfeet, but I don't know what luck I have had trying to make it interesting. On the Wind River in Wyoming is Crowheart Butte, where a war party of Crows were once corraled by the Shoshones and wiped out, and on the Green River is a stone breastwork such as I have described where a party of Cheyennes were cornered on a cliff by the Utes—the yarn is a typical Indian raid.

And, when you come to think of it, the warfare between the tribes wasn't so much different from conditions on the English-Scottish border a few hundred years ago, and I don't suppose any more cruel and bloody.

In the letter I sent you on Indians and buffalo I think I said that the plains Indians became horsemen in the sixteenth century when I should have said seventeenth, the best authorities seeming to place the date from 1650 to 1750—it took about a hundred years for horses to become common among them.—WM. WELLS.

HERE'S an account of our Camp-Fire Station, No. 118, at North Muskegon, Michigan. The courtesies and services it extends to those of us wandering that way will be interesting to keepers of other Stations as well as to readers in general. Advertising this magazine, however, is in no manner or degree an obligation on a keeper. Naturally we're glad of such advertising but certainly not if it in any way seems to put a taint of commercialism on the Stations.

It is a splendid testimonial to the type of man who sits around our Camp-Fire that the services extended by our Stations have not been imposed upon, so far as yet reported, except in the case of one Station, which was promptly closed in consequence. It is also a testimonial to the men who volunteer their services as keepers; they are not the kind to be sized up as "easy marks."

A keeper is boss of his Station. The services he definitely agrees to provide are simple ones and he is under no obligation to go beyond them. If he does, in good comradeship, add other services such services are at all times entirely subject to his own discretion and pleasure. If a visitor should make himself objectionable, the keeper owes him no services whatsoever except delivery of any mail for him or receipt of mail from him. A man may have either ragged clothes or good ones and be either OK or very much not. If a keeper finds him the latter, the proper treatment, figuratively speaking, is to take the ax in both hands, give it a good swing and bring it down between the eyes. Repeat as needed.

Camp-Fire Station 118, James Fort Forsyth, Keeper, located in the offices of the *Peninsular Clarion*, North Muskegon's weekly newspaper, has been reopened and its services extended to an astonishing degree.

THIS Station, opened in the early part of 1922, was temporarily closed for a period of three months, which Forsyth, publisher of the *Clarion*, spent at Chicago, where he made connections with the City News Bureau of Chicago and the International Editorial Association, his idea being to gain an insight into metropolitan newspaper methods. He has, according to a letter just received, returned to North Muskegon, and will bring out his paper in an increased size commencing with the issue of January 6, 1923.

Immediately upon his return the Station was reopened and development of the service idea was commenced.

In the first place he has started to run a regular card on the editorial page.

A folding couch has been installed for traveling members and is attractively camouflaged with a hanging burlap curtain. A mail box of sheet-metal, decorated by a sign-artist with the Camp-Fire emblem, rests on the table; the box is locked, and mail may be obtained by applying to the clerk in charge.

A register book with a history of the founding of the Station in its fore-pages is also on the table; a bottle of ink and several pens are handy; on the lower shelf of the table are several years' files of *Adventure*, contributed by local members, and hanging on the wall above the table are clippings from *Adventure* explaining Camp-Fire, listing the Stations, and the like, neatly framed.

A WRITING table well stocked with stationery is near by and several little writing accessories are lying on it. An Oliver typewriter is always at the command of members familiar with typewriters.

A bulletin board with items of interest to local members and briefs about roads, together with maps, for the nomads. A world atlas and Encyclopedia Britannica are also available. The latest copy of *Adventure* is always to be seen, conspicuously placed.

Forsyth is always on the look-out for some means of improving the services and congeniality of the station, and a hearty welcome is always assured the visitor. Being a new Station not many have signed the register, but those who come will always be urged to stay for "chow" and a night's bunk.

The keeper would appreciate hearing from other Station agents. Why not form a "Keepers Klub?" By the way, newspapers having Stations might follow the card insertion idea to advantage, copy the card, after, of course, making the necessary changes. Slugs of the "71" emblem obtainable through *Adventure.*

FIRE

CAMP 71 STATION

—of—

The Peninsular Clarion

James Fort Forsyth, Agent

ADVENTURERS ALWAYS WELCOME!!

INFORMATION
PHONE
5891-A

ADVENTURE MAGAZINE Is Sold At These News-stands

FORTIER'S CHATEAU THEATRE and UNION BANK STANDS

FORTIER'S NEWS DEPOT

FINK'S CIGAR STORE

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

Alabama—50—Fairfield. Percy E. Coleman, 405 Forty-fifth St.
Arkansas—104—Pine Bluff. B. C. Jordan, mouth of Bago Meto on Ark. River..
161—Hot Springs. Tom Manning Jr., 322 Morrison Ave.
California—44—Oakland. Lewis F. Wilson, 836 Seventh Ave.
28—Lost Hills. Mr. and Mrs. M. A. Monson, care of Gen. Del. No. 2.
38—Los Angeles. Colonel Wm. Strover, Westlake Military School, Mount Washington.
60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Magalia, Butte Co., K. W. Mason.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
113—Vallejo. Edith G. Engesser, Golden Triangle Rabbitry, Highway Homes.
49—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press 1264 Valencia St.
114—Mill Valley. Louis F. Guedet, Restawhyle Knoll.
115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sabastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham, Box 388.
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128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
Connecticut—86—New Haven. C. S. Roberts, 457 Fayerwether Hall, Yale University, Elm Street and Blount Ave.
103—New Haven. Ralph Pierson, 3 Yale Station.
142—Hartford. Homer H. Brown, 47 Sisson Ave.
Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 1243 N. E. Miami Court.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. South River Drive.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
129—Clearwater. E. E. Preston, 504 Vine St.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Courier.*
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald.*
Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
Illinois—47—Peoria. B. H. Coffeen.
66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
67—Plainfield. J. P. Glass, The Linshield Co.
Kentucky—144—Corbin. Keith Mauney.
Maine—19—Bangor. Dr. G. B. Hathorne, 70 Main St.
59—Augusta. Robie M. Liscomb, 73½ Bridge St.
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82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Hagerstown. L. J. Schaefer.

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111—West Medford. Stanley Clarence Lary, 21 Jackson Road, 56.
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69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1133 Lincoln Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
80—Detroit. R. A. Taylor, 5120 Maybury Grand.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—North Muskegon. J. F. Forsyth, *The Peninsular Clarion*. The Forsyth Publishers.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 309 So. Saginaw St.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Box 244.
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94—St. Louis. C. Carter Lee, M. D., 3819 Olive St.
127—Salem. Emmet C. Higgins, 100 N. Tenth St.
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New Jersey—17—Caldwell. Chas. A. Gerlard, Box 13.
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91—Tenafly Ed Stiles, P. O. Box 254.
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133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
North Dakota—109—Stanley. Dr. W. W. Coe, Box 301.
160—Fargo. James E. Cowan, Central Garage, rear Grand Theatre.
Ohio—58—Cleveland. J. F. Thompson Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Columbus. Geo. T. Watters, 679 N. Nelson Road.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
63—Ulrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach, 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
121—Philadelphia. Don L. Brown, 3444 D St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 21st St.
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Texas—54—Houston. M. B. Couch, Route 2, Box 189.
99—Beaumont. D. E. Jonson, 784 Orleans St.
33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 2003 Gray St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
135—Mexia. Charles Q. Hurley, M.D.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Vermont—56—Fort Ethan Allen. E. Worth Benson, Box 10.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, Custom House Building.
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153—Monroe. Ed. L. Carson, *The Monitor*.
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5—Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. 2, 150 Biddle St.
138—Tomahawk Lake. Mrs. J. S. Hughson, Hughson's Resort.
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Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Rue Chapelle de Grace 4,—Grate Kapel-straat, 4.
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84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. Thos. Jocelyn.
4—Dundedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly*.
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 177½ De Meurons St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
62—Tweed, Ontario. George L. Catton.
85—Ontario. J. Wonal, Simcoe St. S., Oshawa.
102—Amherst. Lloyd E. Mac Pherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mars, Smallwood Bldg.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominques, 7 Cerro.
Great Britain—65—North Wales. William J. Cooper, "Kia Ora," Plastirion Ave., Prestatyn.
Hawaiian Islands—167—Leilehua, Oahu. Fred E. Truman, Chateau Shanty.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Fenix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. El Humo, Apartado 238.
Porto Rico—46—San Juan. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 944.
Spanish Honduras—70—Jos. Buckly Taylor, La Ceiba.

TWO years in our cache, but here is something about surviving buffalo:

Longview P. O., Alberta, Canada.

I note that your Mr. Carson replies to Ethan Postle of Idaho that there are a herd of five hundred buffalo between Great Slave Lake and Peace River and that they were protected by the Dominion Government. You state at the beginning of the article that it seems to you that the Yellowstone Park does not contain the only large herd of buffalo left, according to Mr. Carson's letter. For your information I beg to advise that what is probably the largest herd of buffalo in the world is located at Wainwright, Alberta, where there are about five thousand buffalos. They are all protected by the Government, who have set aside the Wainwright reserve for the animals. I think the herd numbered last Spring some four thousand-odd animals and the calf drop was something like 1,300 more.—GUY WEADICK.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services of *Adventure* to readers: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

Ask Adventure A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1, 2. The Sea. **In Two Parts**
3, 4. Islands and Coasts. **In Two Parts**
5, 6. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. **In Two Parts**
7. Australia and Tasmania
8. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
9. New Guinea
10. Philippine Islands
11. Hawaiian Islands and China
12. Japan
13. Asia, Southern
14—20. Africa. **In Seven Parts**
21. Turkey and Asia Minor
22, 23. Balkans. **In Two Parts**
24. Scandinavia
25. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
26, 27. South America. **In Two Parts**
28. Central America
29, 30. Mexico. **In Two Parts**
31—37. Canada. **In Seven Parts**
38. Alaska
39. Baffinland and Greenland
40—44. Western U. S. **In Five Parts**
45—48. Middle Western U. S. **In Four Parts**
49—52. Eastern U. S. **In Four Parts**
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. **In Three Parts**
Fishing in North America
Mountains and Mountaineering
Standing Information
Lost Trails

Travel in Austria

TWO beautiful routes for the motor cyclist:

Question:—"I am writing to obtain some information on various subjects, some of which probably would not be covered by you under the 'Ask Adventure' columns, but will certainly appreciate it if you will help me out on the following:

1. What is the present feeling of Austrians, generally speaking, toward Americans?

2. What passports would be necessary in order to visit Austria, going in from France?

3. What is approximately the value of a dollar in Austrian money; that is, its purchasing-power?

4. Would one be required to pay duty on a used

motorcycle and side-car to enter France? If so, what amount?

5. What license would be required to operate?

6. Would one so traveling be required to register at the gendarmerie of every village he passed through?

7. Can you give me an estimate of what it would cost to ship a motorcycle to Bordeaux?

8. Can you say what a motorcycle would cost in France (French or foreign make)?

9. Is it true that the Ford car is manufactured anywhere in Europe? Is the Chevrolet? Could you tell me what they sell for there?

10. Can passports be obtained from here? How long in advance must they be applied for?

11. I have been told that a certain party, upon landing in France with a light car, was required to deposit approximately $900 with French customs officials as a guaranty that the car would not be sold in France. The car had been used. Do you know anything about such a procedure?

12. Is any license plate, other than a State (U. S.) license plate required on motor vehicles in touring Europe?

If in answering these questions you can give rough estimates where costs are concerned, it will serve very well rather than further reference, as my pal and I are thinking of taking a trip back to France with a motorcycle and side-car and covering territory that we once did in issue 'hobs.' If our dreams materialize we can then get the precise figures as we need them.

From France we intend visiting Austria if it would not prove too difficult in crossing over."—Edw. R. Bryant, Kittitas, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Fleischer:—

1. The Austrians know very well that the relief action undertaken by Americans has kept them alive, and for that reason they look upon the United States as their savior. You may expect a cordial reception, especially in Vienna. There has been of late a feeling over there that foreigners spend too much money in buying up everything worth while, which makes it impossible for the Viennese to get anything at all. Take a tip.

2. When applying for your passport mention countries you wish to visit. See last paragraph.

3. Fluctuates. A friend of mine, just returned, tells me he got as many as 50,000 kronen for $1. Look up exchange quotations in daily papers.

4. Yes. My informant states that payment won't amount to much in U. S. currency. All depends on the good will of the customs people.

5. If you have a U. S. chauffeur's license, it will be all you require.

6. No. What makes you think so? Your passport takes care of all that.

7. I have inquired at several steamship offices. Their rates are based on cubic feet a crated motorcycle will measure. Rates from $15 to 25.

8. I have no information on that subject, but they are an expensive article just at present.

I must admit that your last four questions are hard to answer. You will realize, of course, that France is not within the territory I happen to know about, and I had to make inquiries.

Your ninth question I can not answer. Why not write direct to Detroit?

10. You may obtain a passport by direct application to the State Department in Washington, D. C. It will cost you ten dollars, and you can secure all consular visés from the port of your sailing. That will save you time. Suggest three weeks prior to sailing.

The last two questions I submitted to a friend in the French Line office; and he could not tell me. The French consul is not listed in the telephone book and I could not get to him. I was told, however, that on a used car or motorcycle there is little duty and if you should be required to deposit a small amount, that sum would be refunded upon leaving the country. If your cycle is a well-known make, it will not cost you anything.

You need no foreign license plate, but a permit to operate your machine, which costs very little.

This last information I merely pass on to you without underwriting it as facts.

If you intend to sail from New York drop in on me and I will give you a letter to my friend at the port of your landing. I shall be glad to assist you and your friend to get the best shipping rates for your cycle to Europe.

It won't be difficult to go to Austria from France. You ought to know French roads. From Paris due east to Strassburg. From there I would suggest crossing to Germany, either Koeln or Aachen (Aix la Chapelle) along the Rhine (east shore) to Mannheim east to Munich (1) or Nuremberg (2).

If Route 1: South to Regensburg, enter Upper Austria. Beautiful roads along Danube to Linz, thence to Vienna.

Route 2: Cross into Czecho-Slovakia *via* Waiden to Eger. Highway south through Marienbad to Pilsen. Southeast to Budweis. Into Austria, *via* Gmuend to Vienna. Get yourself a Baedecker guide. Any bookstore, or address Brentano's, 5th Avenue and 27th St., N. Y. City. Specify countries.

If you need more dope write again. If you call on me I shall be glad to give you lots of details.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in alternate issues of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Croakers

THERE'S a reason why the other name of this fish is "hard-head." Brother Shannon's remark that they're so common as to be underrated reminds me that hereabout Hudson River shad used to be rather looked down on for the same reason:

Question:—"Please give me some information on croaker-fishing, the proper bait and the proper time to fish for them. Is there any kind of fish lure that you would recommend?"—A. E. Schaeffer, Jacksonville, Fla.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—Croakers, or "hard-head," commence biting in Chesapeake Bay waters with the beginning of March and are caught in large numbers throughout the Summer months.

They are ground feeders, particularly fond of shell reefs, and may be caught with almost any bait used in salt water. Shedder-crabs, shrimp, bits of mullet, and oysters make good bait. Use a stout hook as they manage to butt their heads into the shell reefs and break an ordinary hook about as sheep-head perform.

I never saw one caught on an artificial lure of any sort, although the wife did catch several on Mayflies last Spring, while fishing for striped bass from a wharf in the upper end of the bay.

They are a good edible fish which on account of its commonness has been considerably underrated in this section. Personally I'd as soon tackle a well-cooked croaker as any fish found in salt water.

California's Big Trees

OLDEST living things on earth. Literally they were old "when Hector was a pup:"

Question:—"How old are some of the largest trees of California?

If this question is not in your line please tell me where to write to get this information."—C. R. BEATTIE, North Vancouver, B. C.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Some of the largest trees in California were large trees when Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

Some that have been cut showed an age well above 3,500 years, in trunks no larger than many now standing.

It is probable that the General Sherman tree, largest standing, is close to 4,000 years old. There is enough lumber in it to fence 160 acres of land and cut it up in 20-acre lots, build a big barn, two-story house, a big bunk-house and two other outbuildings.

Oil-Fields of Alaska

WILL our northern Territory ever rival the gushers of Oklahoma or Tampico? It's more than likely, opines Mr. Solomons:

Question:—"Will you be kind enough to give me any information you may have concerning the oil-fields of Alaska—chances for development, Government and local restrictions if any, accessibility of transportation, etc.

If you see fit to publish this letter kindly omit my name."— —— ——, Los Angeles, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Solomons:—For years oil lands were withdrawn. Lately a leasing system has been inaugurated, and under its stimulus several concerns have begun prospecting.

In the interim the only going concern was the Catalla Company, named after the principal oil-bearing district in southern (somewhat southeastern) Alaska. They did not make much of a success.

You may obtain details of the leasing regulations from the Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., and also much information as to what is known of the resources. The Standard Oil Company is interested directly and indirectly.

In general, the industry has scarcely begun. Little prospecting has been done, but those who should know—whose guess, that is, is better than others'—say that there are worlds of oil in Alaska. The present fields are near tide-water and harbors. The local market practically doesn't exist as yet.

I rarely have an inquiry as to oil. I am glad to be able to give it to you as my opinion, after considerable familiarity with oil (old "Standard" man—me!) and twelve years in Alaska, that I think the thing is worth very serious study and thought and time up there. Oil is the one thing that measurably defies the ordinary difficulty of transport (unless the source is *too* far from tide-water). Go to it.

There is oil in numerous places in Alaska. I speak only (above) of the generally known and more immediately available field.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

Wayside Cookery

HERE'S a man who literally "eats crow." You can't be too proud-stomached if you want to keep the chow-bill down while you're on the road:

Question:—"Maybe you could give me a little advice on how to fix for a walking-trip. I am going from here cross-country through Ohio, Pennsylvania and Michigan up to the Great Lakes.

I am not in any hurry; got all next Summer; but what I would like to know most is how to cook fish or rabbit or squirrel and game like that. I know how to fix green corn, and birds by rolling them in mud with the feathers on, and a few others; but that's about all. For other things I am fixed very well—a hammock and blanket, Army kit and medicine, .22 rifle and hand-ax, change of clothes and also shoes; and if there's anything more I need to make up a sight-seeing walking outfit, please, sir, let me know; and the most of all let me know how to cook on the road without taking too many pans and pots."—WILLIAMS WASHINGTON, Cincinnati, O.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—Over on this slip are general and particular suggestions for your proposed hike.

Now about cooking. I found my frying-pan good for frying fish. Just salt the fish, roll it in a bit of cornmeal and fry it in thin slices in hot grease, lard or cotton-grease (Crisco, Cottolene, etc.). You can cut fish up fine, put into water with carrots, potatoes, turnips, onion and bits of cabbage, and make a chowder. You can wrap in corn-leaves, tie with wire and cover with mud, as you do birds.

Steaks you fry in the pan, or broil in a ten-cent store toaster, or on a small wire grid; same with sliced ham, chops, etc. You can cook beef pot-roast in frying-pan or boil in a pail (aluminum is best, I think). Boil with vegetables and make a stew or soup. Also can use birds; I've eaten owls, crows, blackbirds, blue-heron breasts and other birds and animals legal to kill. Also woodchucks, porcupines and other legal provender. You will get into trouble if you kill game out of season. All those States you name protect rabbits, squirrels and most birds. Better write U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for game laws.

This book tells you all the game laws of these States.

You have to have fishing-licenses in Pennsylvania, too; also hunting-licenses if you shoot legal or protected animals either.

Flapjacks: Flour mixed with cornmeal, oatmeal, one cupful to one spoonful baking-powder; half-spoon salt; water or milk, to rather thin batter. Cook in bacon grease and cottolene, spoonful at a time, till bubbles on top, then turn over and brown good. Biscuit, same way, only thicker batter, and cook in frying-pan under a cover. Turn over a few times, over slow fire (coals best). Be careful it doesn't burn.

Horace Kephart's book on Camping and Camp Cookery (Macmillan Company, publishers, through any book store) or the Boy Scout Book will give you a lot of good ideas.

If you want an answer, read the rules.

Multi-Firing Flint Pistols

THEY provided a great surprize for the wily foeman who thought to play foxy by drawing his antagonist's fire and then rushing into close quarters on the assumption that the powder-and-shot phase of the scrap was over:

Question:—"I start my letter with the statement that I am not a collector of firearms, but have picked up here and there some interesting things, and also have inherited and been given things of interest, most of which I have the history and the origin of.

Last night while looking through the *Adventure* magazine I ran across your name in regard to weapons past and present. Therefore I am writing to ask you if you can give me the nationality and the period of a pistol, the sketch of which I have drawn and now enclose with this letter.

This pistol was given to me about fifteen years ago by my mother, who told me that it had been given to her by my father's uncle. This is as far as I have been able to trace its history.

The description of the pistol is as follows:

A four-barreled flint-lock; barrels and breech-block of brass; priming-pan, lock, trigger-guard and safety pin of steel; rosewood grip and silver butt-plate; barrels separate and round; rifled at muzzle to a depth of about ¾ of an inch; breech-block where barrels join, octagonal; engraved on right side as per drawing, and on left side a spray of roses with a chain of leaves.

The priming-mechanism is as follows:

Priming-chamber divided in center by steel wall; bottom of chamber made by steel cylinder, one-quarter of which is concave, and cylinder operated by a ball lever on left-hand side; on the right-hand side is a steel plate which slides over top of right side of priming-chamber, cutting off the priming; this is operated by button on the right of breech-block. The ball lever when pulled up gives cylinder one-quarter turn, cutting off enough priming-powder in the concave side and also closing the lower barrel vents.

Upper left barrel vent always open, and is numbered on barrel and breech-block "1." Lower left barrel vent in center of concave part of cylinder, which when turned by ball lever brings priming into view, and is numbered on barrel and breech-block "2;" lower right barrel, which is numbered "3" on barrel and breech-block; vent for same operated by ball lever, but it can not be fired before upper right barrel is discharged; upper right barrel has no number on barrel or breech-block.

After discharging lower left barrel, ball lever is turned, cutting off priming-powder in lower right, and slide button on right pulled back, disclosing priming for right upper barrel. When this has been fired, ball lever turned brings priming-powder of lower right into view.

The pistol can also be fired in this order:

Upper left, upper right, lower left, lower right. This is done by means of slide on right being pulled back before ball lever of cylinder is given one-quarter turn. After top barrels are discharged, cylinder is turned and slide on right side pushed forward, cutting off priming of lower right barrel. The safety is a slotted slide so that hammer goes through it, and when pushed forward a pin goes into a small hole just above priming-pan cover, which prevents it being opened or trigger being pulled until pin is pulled back. By this arrangement the priming is held in place when pistol is not in use.

On lower sides of breech-block there is a hall mark as per drawing. On the left side of breech-block there is engraved the name of "J. PROBIN." This, I believe, is the name of the maker, as there is on the grip a silver name-plate but no name.

I have shown this pistol to quite a number of collectors of firearms in the city of Baltimore, among them the late Mr. Edward P. Baugh, whom you no doubt know of, and they have been unable to give me any information in regard to origin and nationality or period when this pistol was made.

I trust that with this description and drawing you will be able to give me some information."—ROBERT BARKER HARRISON, Baltimore, Md.

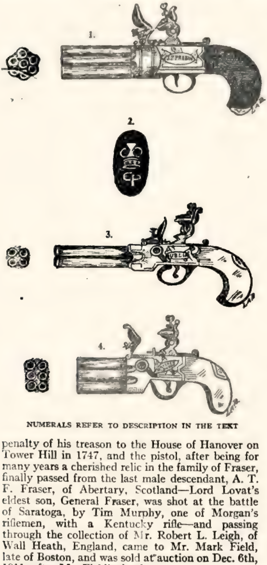
Answer, by Mr. Barker:—It was an unusual pleasure to me to receive so carefully drawn a sketch of a pistol. As a rule it is something like this: "I have a brass double-barreled *revolver* with a wooden handle. Can you tell me who made it and what it is worth?" Your description also is excellent.

Yes, I presume that I can tell you as much about it as any one can. Multi-firing arms were attempted almost from the inception of gunpowder. Three, four, six and seven barreled pistols, both of the match-lock and flint varieties, both in revolver and pepperbox fashions. I go into this subject at some length in my lecture, "Arms—Their Evolution and Influence on History," and show examples of them in quite a few stereopticon slides. I will not go into the subject at length here, as I purpose shortly to write a short article on multi-firing small arms. Probin, some of whose pistols are marked "J. W. Probin," was an English gunmaker of London during the latter half of the eighteenth century. He seemed to specialize on multi-firing flint arms.

I am enclosing you some pen-and-ink sketches. One of the most beautiful things that Probin turned out, you may see in No. 1. It is a seven-barreled flint-lock revolving pistol, brass barrels and frame, like yours. Six barrels numbered from 1 to 6 are grouped around the seventh barrel. There is, as in yours, a single hammer and flash-pan. Drawing back the trigger guard releases the barrels, which are revolved by hand.

The frame is beautifully engraved with flags, cannon, etc. There is a silver mask butt-plate and silver name-plate, much the same as yours. Its full length is 11¼ inches. Prior to 1914, when it was sold at auction—to whom, I do not recall—this pistol was owned by Mr. Jacob Steiner of Brooklyn, N. Y. The mate to it, with barrels numbered 7 to 12, was at that time in another American collection.

I am surprized that collectors could give you no more information. Such pistols, although rare and fine, are not infrequent, and were made quite extensively both in England and on the continent between 1750-1800. One similar to the above, made by Hunter of Edinburgh, belonged to Simon Fraser, Lord Lovat, Scottish Jacobite conspirator, and one of the chiefs in "Bonnie Prince Charlie's" uprising in 1746, when the last fighting on Britain's soil was done in the last futile attempt of the Stuart to regain the crown of his fathers. Lovat paid the penalty of his treason to the House of Hanover on Tower Hill in 1747, and the pistol, after being for many years a cherished relic in the family of Fraser, finally passed from the last male descendant, A. T. F. Fraser, of Abertary, Scotland—Lord Lovat's eldest son, General Fraser, was shot at the battle of Saratoga, by Tim Murphy, one of Morgan's riflemen, with a Kentucky rifle—and passing through the collection of Mr. Robert L. Leigh, of Wall Heath, England, came to Mr. Mark Field, late of Boston, and was sold at auction on Dec. 6th, 1911, after Mr. Field's death.



NUMERALS REFER TO DESCRIPTION IN THE TEXT

Other makers of multi-firing pistols of the period were Vickers of Chester; G. Goodman & Co., London; G. Turner, Dublin; Hollis of Charlton; Seglas of London; Isaac Pratt, London; and N. I. Bosset of Liège.

Four-barreled flint pistols are made in divers ways. No. 3, by Hutchinson of Dublin, is similar to yours, save that all four barrels are reached by the revolving cut-off, such as is on the left-hand side of yours. Others had one hammer and pan, and the barrels revolved by hand. Still others fired all four barrels at once. I should fear—only once. Some had two hammers side by side, and four frizzens—what you term the "priming-cover"—and flash-pans, so that after firing the upper two barrels, the barrels were revolved, and thus two more pans and frizzens faced the hammer, ready for discharge.

No. 4, made by Brasher of London, and which is the only specimen I know of in the United States, has six barrels—three in line, side by side—and like yours has the revolving cut-off on the left and the sliding cut-off on the right.

The mark that you term a "hall mark" and reproduce as a "P" beneath a coronet is probably worn. It is as sketch No. 2, and has been a proofmark of the British (London gunmakers) since the days of Queen Anne.

You may always be sure that a name put on in the manner that "J. Probin" is in this case is the name of the maker—not the owner.

You have probably already guessed why the fourth barrel is not numbered. The other three are numbered respectively with the frame where each barrel screws on, as otherwise the threads might differ and a barrel get stuck. With three barrels numbered a blank barrel and frame answer the purpose quite as well as a fourth number. Thus with two barrels, there is need of numbering but one of them, although both frequently are numbered.

If I continue, I fear that I shall have nothing left to put in the aforementioned article, hence will close. I trust that these things may prove of interest to you and envy you your possession in a purely friendly spirit.

P. S.—I find that I have neglected to say that the safety, which you speak of, not only locks the frizzen down tightly over the pan, thus preventing the powder from escaping, but also holds the cock or hammer immovable at a half-cock. This is the usual type, and is to be found on practically all high-grade, center-hung hammer flint pistols.

You have fallen into one natural error, which may often be found in cataloguing by those who ought to be more fully informed. The grooving of the barrels, which I see you observed extended only ¾ of an inch from the muzzle, is not rifling. When pistols, the barrel of which screwed on to the frame, were single, they had a small ridge about half an inch long underneath the barrel on which could be fitted a slotted wrench, to start the barrel if stuck.

As a wrench could not be put around barrels like these, double, or triple, a tool was made that would fit into these grooves. It was frequently on one end of the handle of the bullet mold. In this class of pistol, single or multiple, the barrel was frequently—in fact, usually—of steel, and the frame only of brass.

Free service, but don't ask us to pay the postage to get it to you.

Customs of the Japanese

SEE Rule 4 on page 18. Whenever I see a loose question like this, I'm divided between admiration for the "A. A." expert's good nature and—well, never mind what. Be sure, however, that when Rule 4 is not complied with, "A. A." experts can, and most do, throw the inquiry away unanswered:

Question:—"I am very much interested in Japan as I expect to go there in the near future. Would you kindly send me any particulars regarding that country, especially the customs?"—ROBERT WILLIAMS, Represa, Calif.

Answer, by Mrs. Knudson:—It is rather a difficult task to give a satisfactory general account of any country in a letter, or to tell much of its customs.

Of course some Japanese customs differ from ours and seem strange to us, just as our customs seem strange to the Japanese. By Europeans and Americans Japan has frequently been referred to in the past as "topsy-turveydom," but the Japanese, from their viewpoint, may truthfully call our country by that same name.

For instance, the custom in Japan of leaving the shoes at the door before entering a house seems a peculiar one to us. Yet it is a most sensible one in Japan, considering that the shoes commonly worn there are wooden clogs and the house floors are covered with soft, padded, uncolored straw mattings. The wooden shoes might easily cut or break and quickly wear out these mattings, to say nothing of soiling them. The heavy white cloth socks worn by the Japanese in themselves are good house shoes.

In public places such as temples, visited by large numbers of tourists, and at the big stores—the floors of many of which are matting-covered—courteous attendants at the entrance are provided with cloth covers to tie over shoes like those we wear. And the attendants, without expecting a tip, remove them when one leaves the place.

The Japanese, as you know, carry paper umbrellas instead of cloth ones; but the paper is a very tough kind and is heavily oiled to shed water. They are made of all colors; and a rainy-day street scene in a Japanese city is a very cheering thing to view, by reason of these bright-colored umbrellas.

They use paper napkins and handkerchiefs and burn them after use, which—to them—seems a much more cleanly custom than ours.

They also make their lanterns and lamp globes of paper; and a Japanese fireman, when assisting at a big fire, carries a lighted lantern in one hand no matter how fierce the blaze from the fire may be. This custom is still in vogue in many towns and country districts, though in the larger coast and commercial cities modern fire-fighting apparatus is expertly manned by trained firemen.

Japanese boatmen row with a bent oar and facing the way they are going. They draw their boats on to the beach stern first. Their boats, like their houses, are unpainted, but are kept very clean.

In matters of business their customs are quite similar to those employed in the business world in every section of the globe, excepting in details of local importance only. I have done business with them for more than twenty-five years in both Japan and the United States, and found them courteous and reliable to about the same extent that one might find any humans. In every race and country one is bound to run across individuals who are "off color" and try to take advantage.

They are keen and wideawake and have been and still are developing very rapidly along industrial and commercial lines of effort, so that their country is now recognized as one of the leading powers of the world. And this modern development has been only since 1854, when Commodore Perry, on behalf of the United States, opened the ports of Japan to foreign commerce in order to make provision for American seamen and American commerce in the North Pacific. So we made the first trade treaty with Japan, and ours was followed by treaties with some of the European powers.

If I were you, and contemplating a trip to Japan, I should try to read several of the modern books written about the land. You might like "Rising Japan," by J. T. Sunderland, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1918; "An Introduction to the History of Japan," by K. Hara, Putnams, 1921; "Development of Japan," by K. S. Latourette, Macmillan, 1918. "Japan Real and Imaginary" by Sydney Greenbie, Harpers, 1920, is a little lighter for reading than the others.

Wyoming's Rustler War

ALSO some facts about the famous pony express of Civil War days:

Question:—"I am taking the liberty of writing you to ask you to give me an account of the rustler war in Wyoming in the year of 1892. I am very much interested in the history of the West, and I want some definite data on this war; and also I would be very glad if you can recommend to me any books on history of the early days in Wyoming.

I have been down in the Jackson Hole country three times as a youth before the war. And I of course heard all the legends about Old Man Jackson who 'founded' the Hole, but I have never yet heard the tale of Jackson told the same way twice. I am very anxious to learn the truth about this Mr. Jackson.

Can you recommend to me a book about the pony express?"—CHARLES G. WILSON, Villa Nova, Pa.

Answer, by Mr. Middleton:—In 1872 the Wyoming Stock Growers' Association was organized. The completion of the Union Pacific had opened the Eastern markets to the Wyoming cattlemen, and the business had become a sure money-maker, which led to the formation of great corporations.

When the cattle business was in its infancy the land was owned by the Government and the range was free to the herd-owners. About 1889 Wyoming was applying for Statehood, which caused a great rush of settlers to the Territory, seeking to be among the first to secure desirable land.

Homesteaders settled along the valleys in the central and northern parts of the Territory wherever water could be had for irrigation, and by doing this restricted to a certain extent the great cattle range and herbage. This finally caused the managers of some of the large cattle companies to fail paying a dividend or two, and upon the stockholders demanding the reason of it, they were informed that the dividend failure was due to the activities of "rustlers."

There was about enough truth to this statement to be plausible. Doubtless a few cattle had been stolen from a herd here and there, but the general round-up system then in practise made it practically impossible for many to be taken. The farms of the settlers presented another reason.

Range cattle, if left to themselves, could get along very well for themselves. If a blizzard came along, they drifted with the storm. After fences were built by the settlers, the storm-driven animals were hemmed in; when they came to a fence, they walked back and forth along it until they died of sheer exhaustion, and many perished in this manner.

As I said before, there were undoubtedly a few people in the Territory who lived by stealing cattle. One of the settlers who came to the country about this time was a James Averill. He took a claim on Sweetwater River, opened a small store and was appointed postmaster. The claim adjoining him was owned by Ella Watson (Cattle Kate). These were in the very heart of the cattle country and were an eyesore to the cattlemen. Averill was accused of selling whisky, and Cattle Kate of having a questionable reputation.

One night in the Summer of 1889 ten men rode up to Averill's store, covered him with guns and demanded that he surrender. They then went to Cattle Kate's house and took her out, hanging both her and Averill as a warning to all rustlers. There were two witnesses, one of whom escaped and gave the names of the party to the grand jury. He was hounded out of the Territory.

Other murders were frequent, and if there were any witnesses, they were either persuaded to leave the country or were killed. Early in 1891 the cattlemen seemed to have come to the determination to terrorize the settlers to such an extent that they would leave the country. Failure to convict the murderers in the past encouraged them to make still bolder war on the settlers. Agents in Colorado, Texas and Idaho recruited a force of men deemed tough enough to cope with the settlers, who had the reputation of being able to care for themselves, and of dying hard. Each one of these recruits was to receive five dollars per day and all expenses, including his mount, pistols and a rifle, and in addition he was to receive a bounty of fifty dollars for each man killed.

The bringing of these men into the State was in violation of the State constitution. This armed force of fifty or sixty men left Cheyenne by special train on April 5th, 1892. On the morning of the sixth they left Casper on horseback. While they were waiting at the Tisdale ranch for their supply-wagons to come up they heard there were some rustlers at the K. C. ranch on the north fork of Powder River. They attacked this ranch on the morning of the ninth, killing Nick Ray and Nat. D. Champion and burning the ranch buildings. They then pursued their way toward Buffalo, meeting on the way a settler named Jack Flagg and his stepson, whom they tried to capture. Failing in this, they started on a forced march to Buffalo, hoping to get there before Flagg could, and spread the alarm.

At 2 A. M. the next morning they were resting at the 28 ranch, twenty miles from Buffalo, when they were met by a horseman who informed them that Sheriff Angus of Buffalo had a posse of two hundred men and was waiting for them. The raiders then changed their plans; they went to the T. A. ranch on Crazy Woman Creek, fortified themselves behind a breastwork of logs and awaited the attack they were sure was coming.

At daylight on the eleventh, the ranch was surrounded by some four hundred armed and determined settlers. The settlers then sent a request to Fort McKinney for cannon with which to attack the breastwork of logs, but this was refused. They had previously captured the supply-wagons and a supply of dynamite, so two of the wagons were converted into a portable breastwork which they called a "go-devil."

On the night of the twelfth they dug some rifle-pits within three hundred yards of the breastworks of the invaders and planned that on the morning of the thirteenth they would push the go-devil close enough to drive the invaders from cover with dynamite, when they would have been picked off by rifle-fire from the pits. This would have ended the raid in short order.

On the morning of the thirteenth, as they were about to begin operations, Col. J. J. Van Horn of Fort McKinney came on the scene with three troops of cavalry and took the invaders to the post. The civil authorities asked that they be turned over to them to be tried on the charge of murder, but Gov. Barber refused this on the ground that their lives would be unsafe in Johnson County. They were delivered in Cheyenne, held in Fort D. A. Russell until August, 1892, then released on their own recognizances. Their trial was called for Jan. 21st, 1893; but the "hired men" had left the State meanwhile, and their whereabouts were unknown.

I too have heard many versions as to how Jackson's Hole got its name, and I believe the following to be the true version: In 1827 the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, composed of Smith, Jackson and Sublett, had a rendezvous at mouth of Horse Creek in Wyoming. Smith returned to the coast, Sublett to St. Louis, and Jackson spent the Winter in the valley south of Yellowstone Park. Sublett found him there in the Spring on his return from St. Louis. He named the valley Jackson's Hole and the lake Jackson's Lake in honor of his partner. The names still hold.

The first pony-express rider left St. Joseph, Mo., on the afternoon of April 3rd, 1860. The route was from St. Joseph to Sacramento, Cal. Johnnie Frey was the first rider out of St. Joseph, while Harry Roff took the first mail out of Sacramento. Each rider received a salary of $125 to $150 per month and was required to take an oath to abstain from intoxicating liquors and profane language while in the employ of Russell, Majors and Wadell, the originators of the pony express. Among the most noted riders were Jim Moore, Bill Cody (Buffalo Bill), Robt. Hasalm ("Pony Bob"), J. G. Kelly, George Gardner, "Boston Sam" Hamilton, and one known as "Irish Tom." The postal charges at first were $5 for each half-ounce letter, but this was afterward reduced to $1.

The S. J. Clark Publishing Company of Chicago, Ill., publish a complete history of Wyoming in two volumes, also other publications dealing with Western life. I think if you will write them, explaining what you are looking for in particular, they will cheerfully supply your wants.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Bibliography of Songs

The following list of books is divided into two parts—sea-songs and others. Come on and suggest additions:

THE SEA

Old Sea Chanteys. Bradford and Fagge, London, Eng.
Sailors' Songs and Chanteys. Davis, F. J. (words and Music). Boosey & Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Sea Lanes. Jenness, Burt F. Cornhill Pub. Co., Boston, Mass. $1.50.
Cape Cod Ballads. Joseph C. Lincoln. D. Appleton & Co., N. Y. $2.00.
Sea Songs and ballads. Christopher Stone, Clarendon Press, Oxford, Eng.
Collected Poems. Masefield, John. The Macmillan Co., N. Y. $3.00.
A Sailor's Garland. Masefield, John. The Macmillan Co., N. Y. $3.00.
The Sea's Anthology. Patterson, J. E. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $2.00.
100 English Folk Songs. Sharp, Cecil J. Oliver Ditson & Co., Boston, Mass. $2.50.
Small Craft. Smith, C. Fox. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.25.
Sailor Town. Smith, C. Fox. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.25.
Spindrift. Raison, Milton. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.25.

OTHER SONG-BOOKS

Songs of the Workaday World. Braley, Berton. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.25.
A Banjo at Armageddon. Braley, Berton. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.25.
Buddy Ballads. Braley, Berton. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.25.
In Camp and Trench. Braley, Berton. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.00.
Things As They Are. Braley, Berton. George H. Doran Co., N. Y. $1.00.
Trail Dust of a Maverick. Brininstool, E. A. Author and Publisher, 1428 Morton Avenue, Los Angeles, Calif. $2.50.
Cowboy Lyrics. Carr, Robert V. Small, Maynard & Co., Boston, Mass. $1.25.
Out Where the West Begins. Chapman, Arthur. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.65.
Cactus Center. Chapman, Arthur. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Ranch Verses. Chittenden, Larry. G. P. Putnam's Sons, N. Y. $2.00.
Sun and Saddle-Leather. Clark, Badger. Richard G. Badger, Boston, Mass. $2.50.
Delaney's Song Book Series. W. W., Delaney, 117 Park Row, N. Y. 15 cents each.
Songs of Dogs. Prothingham, Robert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.65.
Songs of Horses. Frothingham, Robert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.65.
Songs of Men. Frothingham, Robert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y.
Songs of the Outlands. Knibbs, Henry Herbert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Riders of the Stars. Knibbs, Henry Herbert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Songs of the Trail. Knibbs, Henry Herbert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Saddle Songs. Knibbs, Henry Herbert. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Cowboy Songs. Lomax, J. L. The Macmillan Co., N. Y. $2.00 and 75 cents.
Songs of the Cattle Trail. Lomax, J. L. The Macmillan Co., N. Y. $1.90.
A Tankard of Ale. Maynard, Theodore. Robert M. McBride & Co., N. Y. $2.00.
The Quest. Neihardt, John G. The Macmillan Co., N. Y. $1.90.
Songs of a Stalwart. Rice, Grantland. D. Appleton & Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Songs of a Sourdough. Service, Robert W. Barse & Hopkins, N. Y. $1.50.
Songs of a Cheechako. Service, Robert W. Barse & Hopkins, N. Y. $1.50.
Rhymes of a Rolling Stone. Service, Robert W. Dodd, Mead & Co., N. Y. $1.50.
Songs of Cowboys. Thorp, Jack. Houghton Mifflin Co., N. Y. $1.65.

Accompany your inquiry with stamped, self-addressed envelop.

The Cruise of the *Bigler*

Now, my boys, if you will listen,
I'll sing you a little song;
So sit you down a while here,
I'll not detain you long.
At Milwaukee in October
I chanced to get a "sit"
On the timber-drover *Bigler*,
Belonging to Detroit.

Chorus

Oh! Watch her! Catch her!
Jump up on her Juba Ju!
Oh, give her sheet and let her boil—
The boys'll put her through!
You ought to have seen her howling, as
The wind was blowing free
On our passage down to Buffalo
From Milwaukee—ee—ee.

It was on a Sunday morning,
About the hour of ten,
The *Robert Emmett* towed us
Into Lake Michigan.
We set sail where she left us in
The middle of the fleet.
The wind was from the southward, so
We had to give her sheet.—*Cho.*

But by the night the wind came down
And blew both stiff and strong,
And swiftly through Lake Michigan
The *Bigler* plowed along
And far before her bows, boys,
The foaming waves did fling,
With every stitch of canvas set
And her courses wing and wing.—*Cho.*

But the wind it came ahead before
We reached the Manitous;
And two-and-a-half a day, sirs,
Just suited the *Bigler's* crew.
From these into the Beavers
We steered her full and by;
We kept her to the wind, my boys,
As close as she could lie.—*Cho.*

At Skillagalee and Waubashene,
The entrance to the strait,
We might have passed the whole fleet
If they'd hove-to to wait.
But we drove them all before us,
The prettiest ever you saw,
Right out into Lake Huron
Through the Straits of Mackinaw.—*Cho.*

In Huron Lake we passed Presque Isle,
And then we bore away,
The wind being fair, we soon flew by
The Isle of Thunder Bay;
But the wind made us close-haul her
Upon her starboard tack,
And with a good lookout we made
For the light of Point aux Barques.—*Cho.*

We made the light and kept inside
By Michigan's east shore,
A-booming for the river,
As we'd oft done before;
Abreast Port Huron Light, my boys,
Both anchors we let go,
And the *Sweepstakes* came along and took
The *Bigler* in tow.—*Cho.*

The *Sweepstakes* took us right in tow,
All of us fore and aft;
She towed us down Lake St. Clair
And stuck us on the flats.
The *Hunter* eased her tow-line
To give us some relief,
And the *Bigler* went astern and smashed
Right into the *Maple Leaf.*—*Cho.*

And then the *Sweepstakes* left us
Outside the river light,
To roam the broad Lake Erie and
The blustering winds to fight.
The wind being fresh and free, my boys,
We paddled our own canoe,
And pointed her nose for the Dummy on
Her way to Buffalo.—*Cho.*

We made the Eau, flew by Long Point,
The wind being fresh and free,
And down the Canada shore we humped,
Port Colborne on our lee.
What's that looms in the distance?
We knew as we drew near,
For like a blazing star shone out
The light on Buffalo pier.—*Cho.*

Ah, now, my boys, so we are safe
In Buffalo Creek at last,
And under Reed's big storehouse
The *Bigler* she's made fast;
And in Tom Guest's saloon, boys,
We'll let the bottle pass,
For we are jolly shipmates, and
We'll take a social glass.—*Cho.*

We soon received our stamps, my boys,
From our skipper, Call McKee,
And with our dunnage jumped ashore
To go off on a spree.
For Garson's then we started
And got there when we chose,
And the boys they rigged us out again
In a splendid suit of clothes.—*Cho.*

Oh, now my song is ended,
And I hope it pleases you.
Let's drink to the old *Bigler*,
Her officers and crew.
I hope she'll sail till Kingdom Come, in
Command of Call McKee,
Between the port of Buffalo
And Milwaukee—ee—ee.—*Cho.*

Compadre Bert Bristol, of Vancouver, B. C., holds me up with this:

It is old, but it is beautiful—
It's the best you've ever seen.
It was worn for more than ninety years
In this little isle so green.
From my father's great ancestors
It was handed down of yore.
It's a relic of old decency—
The hat me father wore.

Sung to the tune of "The Wearing of the Green."

Compadre E. H. Hinman of Atascadero, Calif., wants to know if any of youse fellers ever heard of "The Girl on the Town." Brother Hinman, that shocks us just a little bit here in New York. However, we'll do our best.—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 745 Riverside Drive, New York.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MARCH 20TH ISSUE

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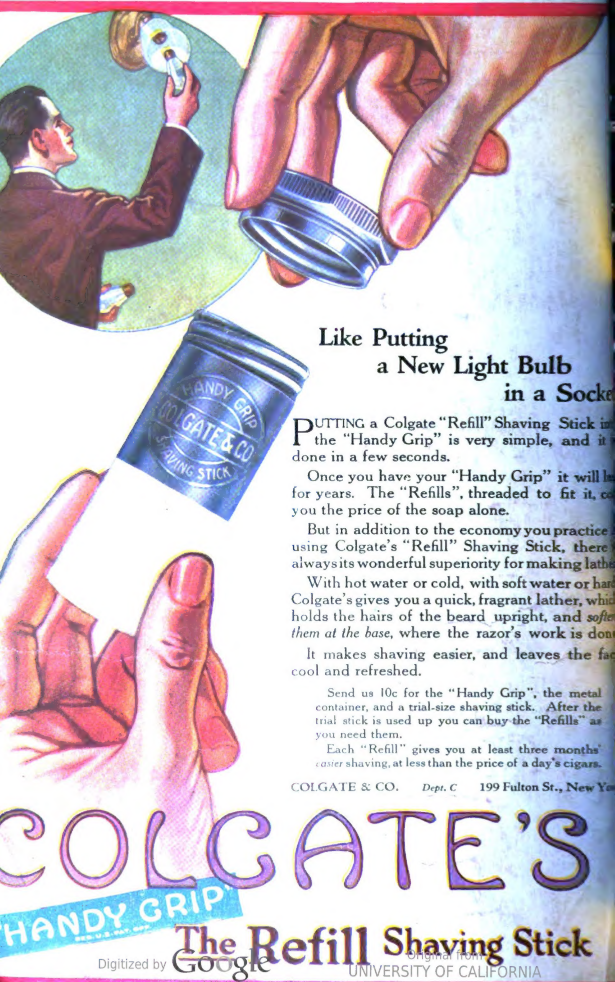

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